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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

SEPTEMBER 29, 2003

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Editorial

'Rods from God'

With no fanfare, the Bush Administration is taking military control of what it terms "near space," thereby laying claim to the area of the Solar System that lies between the Earth and the Moon's orbit. "A key objective ... is not only to ensure U.S. ability to exploit space for military purposes, but also as required to deny an adversary's ability to do so," is how the Pentagon's 2001 *Quadrennial Defense Review* explained U.S. strategy.

Indeed, the success of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq depended on the use of more than 50 military satellites to direct U.S. missiles and bombers to their intended targets. "I'd call this the first real space war," says Brig. Gen. Larry Jones, commander of the 50th Space Wing at Schriever Air Force Base in Colorado.

Air Force Secretary James G. Roche, a self-described "space warrior," is the soldier in charge of U.S. Space Command, the space-based branch of the armed services. In an October 2002 speech at the Conference on the Law and Policy Relating to National Security Activities in Outer Space, Roche explained:

Space capabilities in today's world are no longer nice-to-have: they've become indispensable at the strategic, operational, as well as the tactical levels of war. ... Space capabilities are integrated with and affect every link in the kill chain. ... Given the absolute interdependence of air and space power, we cannot risk loss of space superiority.

According to the Space Command's Strategic Master Plan, by 2025, the United States will have developed the capability to strike any target on Earth within minutes. To that end, the Pentagon is developing a space-based arsenal. These Star Wars weapons include laser-armed satellites—in military lingo, SBLs (Space-Based Lasers)—that will shoot down an enemy's earth-launched missiles, destroy hostile satellites, and attack Earth-based enemy installations. Also on the drawing board are un-manned satellite gunships that would smash earthly targets with non-explosive tungsten rods. Such projectiles, known as "Rods from God," would be so hard and traveling so fast that they could penetrate and destroy a four-story underground bunker.

One of the key systems in U.S. plans to rule the heavens are the "X" series of "military space planes," the prototype of which is being developed by Boeing and Lockheed Martin at

a cost of \$4.8 billion. The Air Force's "X" series, designed to attack and destroy enemy satellites, is slated to replace NASA's Space Shuttle—in the same way that the Pentagon is now slated to replace NASA's civilian administration. Sean O'Keefe, the former navy secretary and current chief of NASA, has said that every NASA mission from now on will be "dual use" (have both military and civilian purposes at the same time).

The legal impediment to the U.S. conquest of space was overcome in 2001 when President George W. Bush canceled the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty with Russia, which prohibited the testing of space-based anti-ballistic missiles.

Today, the obstacles standing in the way of U.S. space dominance are China's budding space program and the European Space Agency's plans to deploy the Galileo satellite system. Not surprisingly, the Bush administration is trying its best to persuade the European Union to put its space program under NATO control. And, this spring at the Space Warfare Center at Schriever Air Force Base, a space-based war game set in the year 2017 pitted the U.S. Blue Team against the Chinese Red Team. Participants at this year's games were told not to get "bogged down in discussions

'Space capabilities are integrated with and affect every link in the kill chain.'

about space law and policies, which disrupted the game's military operations" in 2001.

Peter Teets, a one-time president of Lockheed Martin, is the director of the agency that controls military satellites, the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO). He worries about a situation where "an adversary chooses to leverage the Global Positioning System or perhaps the Galileo constellation to attack American forces with precision." To prevent such an occurrence, according to Teets, beginning in 2004, the NRO will draw up policies to deny other nations, allies included, the use of "near-Earth space"—a policy that goes by the term "negation."

In the '80s, Reagan's Star Wars program prompted public world-wide protest. The lack of concern over Bush's new-and-improved Star Wars demonstrates just how anesthetized we have become. Let's hope we wake up by November 2, 2004.

—Joel Bleifuss

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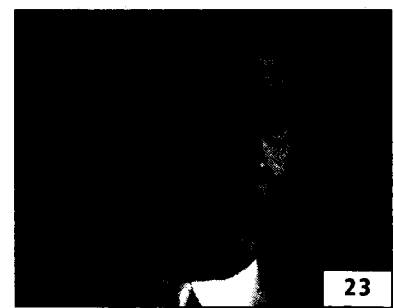
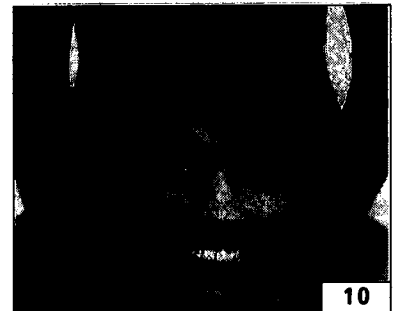
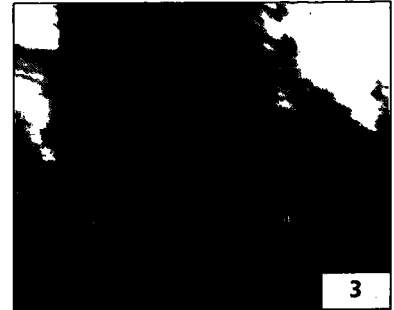
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Do It for the Kids

Thanks for Paul L. Street's review of Henry A. Giroux's *The Abandoned Generation* ("The Kids Aren't All Right," September 1). His review hits me very close to home. As a brand new parent (of twin girls), my political outlook is becoming more radical by the day. Our political leaders have indeed completely "abandoned" any idea that the U.S. government has any obligation whatsoever to the children of this society. Giroux's conclusions, in the reviewer's words, of the right wing's inability to "imagine" any "meaningful collective human experience outside the realms of private and commodified experience" cuts directly to the heart of the matter.

With a problem this profound and pervasive, it can never hurt to collectively generate some clarity on these issues and bring more focus in our work for social change. This book seems like a great place to start that discussion. If anyone reading this letter in the New York City area (especially parents) wants to engage Giroux's book in an informal discussion group setting, I would be interested in organizing and participating in such a venture.

Joe Delia
jdelia@local802afm.org
New York City

Lies, Damn Lies, and ...

Thanks for the articles on the "perception management" that occurs in this country ("How To Sell a War" and "Web of Lies," September 1). One major avenue of propaganda that progressives can influence is AM talk radio. I've heard your very own Salim Muwakkil on national radio, and Howard Zinn was recently interviewed on Michael Medved's show. If more lefties were to engage the airwaves, we could disrupt the "psyops" of reactionary think tanks and PR firms. It's surprisingly easy to call into both local and national programs. Many hosts welcome respectful dissent. There are even progressive hosts to be found at the United Auto Workers funded network, www.ieamERICAradio.com, and on Denver's locally owned KNRC (www.KNRCradio.com). Why let Rush Limbaugh's "dittoheads" have all the fun?

Preston Enright
Denver, Colorado

Huey Long, when asked if the United States would ever have fascism, replied, "Of course it will! But we'll call it anti-fascism!" He was almost right. What we are calling it is "anti-

terrorism." When, in the entire history of this great nation, has an administration so consistently lied to its people?

Edward G. Robles
Franklin, North Carolina

What Would Jesus Bomb?

While I laughed out loud at Terry LaBan's comic in the September 1 issue, his subtext is all too real. A president who claims war as his providential mission is a president whose Christianity needs to be born yet again. Will someone please inform the president that whichever Jesus he found, it wasn't the right one?

Todd Huffman, M.D.
Eugene, Oregon

Vote Clean

Thanks to Craig Aaron for "\$200 Million Pyramid Scheme" (September 1). It is true that the "money primary" is stressed far too much by the lazy, profit-driven mass media at the expense of real examination of policy. It is also true that corporate elites invest in candidates just as they would stocks on Wall Street. The solution to these and other problems is public financing for campaigns, otherwise known as "Clean Money, Clean Elections" legislation. This system has been enacted in several states, and is already netting good results in places such as Maine, where nearly half of the sitting state legislature ran on "clean money." This may have something to do with the fact that they have

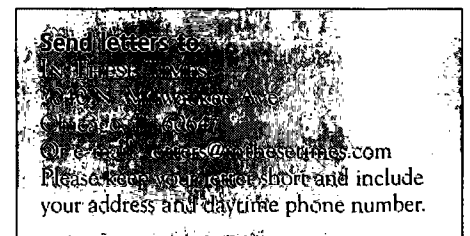
recently enacted statewide health care for all, as well as a state global warming protocol. Campaign finance is the issue that connects to almost every other issue. We need public financing in place to achieve other successes. I strongly urge others to check out www.publiccampaign.org, and to get involved in this issue in their own states.

Matt Corsaro
New Paltz, New York

Poindexter Guidance

A creative flash struck as I read Joe Knowles' editorial on John Poindexter's Policy Analysis Market ("Trading in Terror," September 15). Why not call any stupid idea or thing a Poindexter? For example, two more Poindexters appear in the horror film *Freddy vs. Jason*, reviewed on a latter page. And the Poindexter political figures in the land today? I won't say more. So what better way to honor this nasty pest who won't go away? Keep up the good work, and don't be afraid to call a Poindexter a Poindexter.

Bob Mikulewicz
Goshen, New York



Terry LaBan



Hard Knocks

For many poor students, college remains only a dream

By Mischa Gaus

Sherrie Hetherington graduated from the Seattle-area Highline Community College this year with thousands in sticky debt, but she counts herself among the lucky. The 27-year-old mother of two nearly left school in her last semester because her financial aid was cut off and she was forced to take out a \$3,500 loan, which she fears may break her family's budget.

"If you don't get employment—and who knows in this economy—you're stuck." Still, she says, "I feel good I graduated. They said over 500 people couldn't participate in the ceremony because they didn't meet the requirements or had financial aid problems."

Critical shortcomings in the nation's financial aid system will put higher education out of reach for millions of well-prepared, low-income high school graduates by the decade's end. And for later-life students like Sherrie, few resources are available.

The trends look bad: Budget-crunched states are cutting back and abandoning their commitment to need-based aid, federal financial aid continues to lag behind tuition costs, and graduates' average debt load keeps rising. Grant aid has dropped steadily while loan burdens have increased by 135 percent in the last decade and now make up two-thirds of all financial aid, according to a Congressional Joint Economic Committee study. Seventeen states cut spending on financial aid this year, some by as much as a quarter, while tuition and fees rose in every state.

As a result, nearly half of all qualified low- and moderate-income high school graduates did not enroll in four-year schools last year. Over the course of the decade, the Congress-appointed Advisory Committee on Student Financial Aid estimates, two million students prepared for college simply will not go.

President George W. Bush's response to these disturbing trends has been to blame colleges for ballooning educational costs.

Although last year's federal budget boosted the Pell grant program, Washington's biggest source of aid to poor students, this will only enable more students to receive the grant, not increase its size. Meanwhile, the grant's purchasing power eroded significantly over the past decades. It now pays for less than half the cost of attending a public four-year school; in 1975, it paid for 84 percent. The federal Department of Education recently tightened eligibility criteria for the grant, sure to cause the middle-income families affected to demand relief, which will come invariably at the



SHERRIE HETHERINGTON

Later-life student Sherrie Hetherington had to take out a loan to finish school when her aid was cut.

expense of their more needy neighbors.

Tuition inflation is a problem, but only one root of the issue. Tuition hikes at most private schools in the 1990s were in line with compensation-package increases for skilled private-sector workers, according to experts. At public universities, rising tuition is linked to falling state appropriations.

"It's hard to really make the case that anything unreasonable or obscene is going on" in tuition trends, says Robert Shireman, the James Irvine Foundation's higher education program director—except at elite schools, where tuition is irrationally skyrocketing, driven by relentless competition over star faculty and facilities.

More ominous is a trend toward merit-based financial aid. Lower-tier private schools have shifted to merit aid to attract higher-testing students and to improve their all-important ranking. Merit-based schemes inevitably shrink the pot of funds available to poor students.

States have jumped on the merit-aid bandwagon, too: Non-need aid now accounts for a quarter of all state aid, while studies indicate merit-aid states reduce the number of low-income students attending their schools. The Harvard University Civil Rights Project said merit-aid policies threaten to perpetuate "deeply rooted class structures ... [and] racial inequality."

Some of the best news in financial aid comes from richly endowed institutions like Princeton University, which decided in 2001 to replace all loans with grants, at a cost of about \$5 million last year, a major recommendation made by researchers to increase the number of low-income students in college.

Fixing the system means big increases in federal and state grant aid to reduce loan-and-work packages, tax incentives to increase saving and attract other sources of aid, and more concerted efforts to calm low-income families' fears about affording college—or fitting in once they get there. Despite the advent of mass higher education following the GI bill, colleges are still not welcoming places for poor people, leading otherwise qualified students to skip

enrolling or drop out.

Even with a chorus of voices calling for grant aid boosts, do not look to Congress for dramatic action. Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) will introduce a bill in September reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, which declared that no student should forgo college because she could not afford it. His office is not optimistic. An American Council on Education report advocates doubling the \$4,000 Pell grant—but considering federal fiscal straits, a \$500 increase would be stunning.

"We need to keep pushing," says Sandy Baum, a Skidmore College economics professor and College Board consultant. "I'm glad this has startled people. The question is, has it startled people enough to do something about it?" ■

Parks vs. Profits

Energy companies eye federal lands

By Tom Healy

INDIANAPOLIS—On the weekend of the worst power outage in the nation's history, 32 governors of the United States converged on the Hoosier capital for socializing and policymaking.

Energy, education and the economy led the agenda of the 95th annual meeting of the National Governors Association (NGA) from August 16-19. But the few dozen protesters in the police-designated "free-speech zone" outside the Marriott hotel had another issue: they charged the governors with discussing public policy in private with corporate lobbyists.

Research and support to governors is provided by the NGA's nonprofit arm, the Center for Best Practices, which is funded by foundation grants and dues from 100

"Corporate Fellows," including major energy companies: American Electric Power, ConocoPhillips, DTE Energy, and Exelon/PECO Energy.

NGA Executive Director Ray Schepach denied any behind-the-scenes deal making. "We have kicked out organizations that have unfairly lobbied," he said. Nevertheless, he admitted, "Some of it is legitimate criticism. We have discussed whether the corporate fellows program should be expanded to other groups," such as organized labor, small business and environmental groups.

The impact of corporate interests on the governors was evident in the limited range of discussion about the use of public lands by private companies seeking natural gas.

Vicky A. Bailey, assistant secretary for policy and international affairs at the U.S. Department of Energy, told members of the NGA's Natural Resources Committee that domestic electrical consumption is projected to increase 36 percent by 2025. To meet the increased demand, she said, "coal and natural gas will provide three-quarters of our electricity."

U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Gale Norton, a keynote presenter, also addressed the natural gas shortage. She noted that the Department of the Interior "controls nearly one out of every five acres in the country" and that Interior-managed lands produce about a third of the nation's oil, natural gas, and coal. Citing the "dramatic impact" of soaring natural gas prices on home utility bills and industrial users, she declared that it requires "moving from a regulatory approach to a market approach and quickly finding more domestic sources."

Such rhetoric bolsters the League of Conservation Voters' recent contention that the primary beneficiaries of the administration's environmental actions have been timber, mining, oil and gas industries, and real estate development companies.

Attorney Patricio Silva serves as the Midwest activities coordinator for the Natural Resources Defense Council. He notes that in the last two decades more than 60 percent of all federal public lands have been opened to leasing and that environmental regulations are routinely waived as hardships for industry.

Companies often refrain from leasing lands, says Silva, because of economic and physical restrictions rather than legal protections. "Environmental regulations have never hindered accessing the large natural gas deposits in the Rocky Mountains," he says. "[These are] incredibly isolated areas that will require building hundreds of miles of roads. That's why there hasn't been a lot of drilling; infrastructure is too costly."

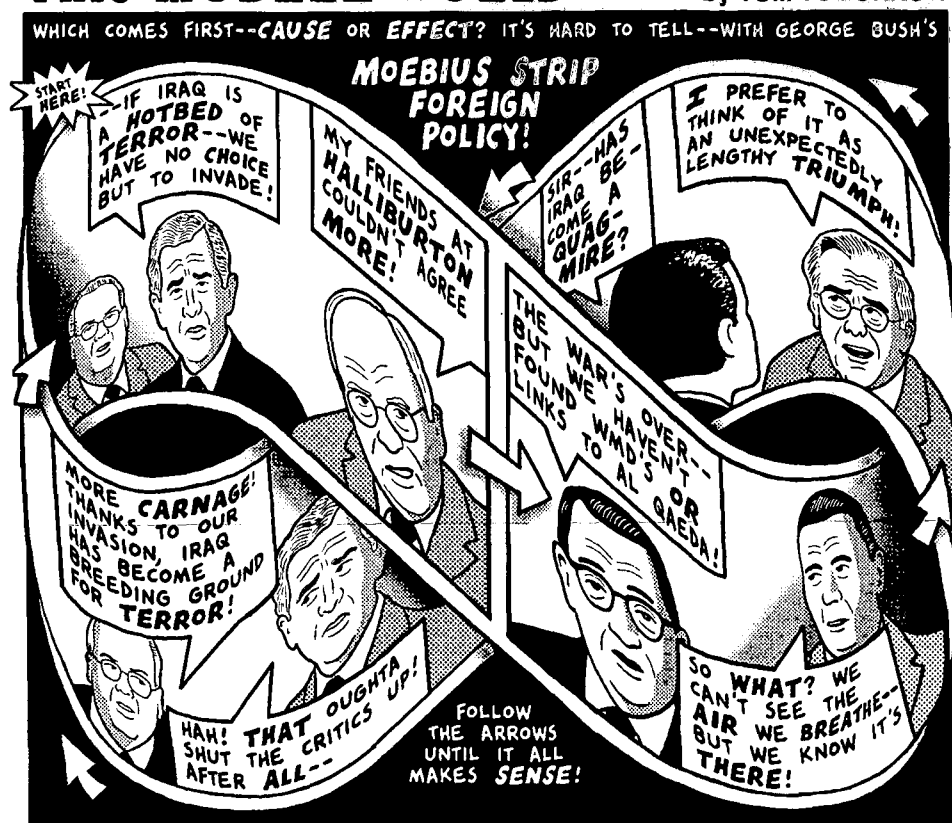
No matter what happens to public lands, the United States will have to import increasing quantities of natural gas, he says. "That's the unfortunate reality about the natural gas shortage."

But is there a shortage at all? Environmentalists argue that conservation and renewable non-fossil fuel technologies are the way to cope with rising electricity demands. While industrial corporations are by far the largest and dirtiest consumers of electrical power, they also can effectively lobby for environmental deregulation. So, consumers will likely bear the brunt of any public relations blitz to reduce electricity use.

Meanwhile, companies like those that fund the NGA, used to cheap and plentiful energy supplies, will continue to lobby for opening federal lands to the extractive industries. ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



SEN. RUSS FEINGOLD NAOMI KLEIN GARY RUSKIN
JEFF COHEN DON HAZEN MARK LLOYD
BARBARA EHRENREICH PAT MITCHELL JEFF C
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They'll be there. Will you?

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Davis' Downfall

Prison spending bloats California's budget

By Van Jones

Despite everything, California's recall race is moving at full speed.

Despite Gov. Gray Davis' appeal to Democrats not to run against him. Despite his assertion that the recall is a Florida-style conspiracy by Republicans to "steal elections [they] can't win." Even despite attempts to push back voting day. A federal court ruled against the ACLU's request to postpone the election until March, when six counties, including Los Angeles and San Diego, will have finally upgraded from the faulty punch-card voting system.

But whoever wins the October 7th election will also inherit a \$38.2 billion

deficit and the worst credit rating of any state in the nation.

How did California get here? Many blame the current crisis on the collapse of the technology boom, the energy crisis, and national economic downturn. But that's only part of the picture.

Davis' own misguided spending and policy priorities are as big a reason as any for California's current troubles. A brief look at Davis' budget, signed in early August, shows how he has sold California's future down the river.

Davis has slashed just about every state-funded program, including education, health care, and workforce development. But one institution seems to be immune from the epidemic belt-tightening: prisons. With just a one percent overall reduction, the Department of Corrections' budget remains almost completely intact.

Some areas of the prison budget even get a big boost—mostly luxuries for the department bureaucracy and for prison

employees. Davis makes up the difference by gutting health care, educational and vocational programs, drug rehabilitation, and other services for inmates.

Why would prisons escape Davis' ruthless budget axe? Just follow the paper trail.

Davis has accepted \$3.4 million in campaign contributions from the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA)—the state's prison guards' union—for his two gubernatorial campaigns in '98 and '02. The union gave Davis the largest single check he has ever received from a group—\$251,000. And Davis is repaying them many times over.

Despite pay hikes in 1998, 1999, and 2000, Davis has approved raising the average prison guard salary even more—to a whopping \$73,428 by 2006. That will cost taxpayers an extra \$120 million this year. By 2006, the annual price tag will be about \$700 million.

And because Davis is paying for this raise by mortgaging California's future,

Art Has Its Reasons

It's probably a lawyer's idea, to let your 19-year-old daughter wander off to a deserted boat-house late at night with a member of a lame yet very popular rock band. It's an equally bad idea, if you are a member of such a rock band, to lure a little girl to a deserted boat-house who happens to be the daughter of the leader of the local Hell's Angels outfit. This, alas, is what happened recently in Jones Beach, New York. Mike Gordon, the 38-year-old bassist for Phish, a rock band popular among fans of the late Grateful Dead, was invited backstage at a concert of another band. Sometime before 1 a.m. according to WNBC-TV, the girl disappeared from the backstage party. She was discovered with Gordon on the dock of the boat-house by some of her father's Hell's Angels associates, who detained the bass player until police arrived. Gordon, who was arrested but not immediately

charged Walker to wait at the lake for birds of prey. "For an hour appears to have passed, but a little for his intentions at this or otherwise. According to the first account, as they waited for birds to arrive, the birds of prey were not ... getting the birds. We areas of the back star's body."

Evil Spirits

The Bible can enlighten us on many things, but dealing with a demonic is not one of them. Torrance Scott, an 81-year-old, eight-year-old Milwaukee boy, is dead because his mother's self-walk guides are convinced that Torrance was possessed by a demon. The boy died during a prayer session in which he was restrained and possibly abused by members of the Faith Temple Church of Apostolic Faith. Police have arrested a minister of the church.

A friend of the boy's mother told the *Milwaukee Journal*-

Some of the officers had been subjected to previous exercises. They had run down "obstacles" two hours before session, said Denise. A sign resembling the experience placed on her by the police officer, he couldn't hardly breathe and that shook her confidence. Then she said she never dared to speak through him's voice — though he can't really speak — saying "I'll take care."

"I got a message from the FBI
 saying Dave
 Kennedy, pastor
 of the church,
 was taking up the
 incident. Dave
 wants to call a
 life back. He
 does."

Get Me Rewrite 1.0

The current
GOP regime will
not be remem-
bered for debt

scar of the "U.S. Patriot Act" ("Operation radar freedom"). Still less will be allude to the worldwide "Operation community Al-Qaeda's Al Qaeda Brigade has claimed responsibility for engineering the recent blackout on the East Coast as part of something it calls "Operation Quick Lightning in the Land of the Tyrant of This Generation." True, it's a little earlier in the original Arabic, but it doesn't exactly lend itself to a very graphic treatment



the long-term costs are even greater. Between cutting programs he should bolster and ignoring others that could save millions, Davis is burning California's bridges to a safe, deficit-free tomorrow.

To finance this unnecessary and exorbitant prison guard pay raise, Davis is cutting prison literacy and vocational programs. These are some of the only programs proven to reduce recidivism. Cutting them means more crime — and more taxpayer dollars spent locking up repeat offenders.

Davis could save money and make California safer by investing in alternatives to incarceration. Alternatives like job training and placement, drug treatment and mental health, and social service programs have been proven to reduce crime and reduce cost. These alternatives are cheaper and safer for everybody: the state, the community, and the offender.

But Davis isn't interested in keeping California safe or out of the red. He only cares about pandering to special interests like the prison guards' union.

That's why prison guards are getting pay raises while teachers across the state are getting pink slips. That's why youth programs are closing their doors and violence prevention programs are shutting down shop. That's why parks and recreation,

daycare centers, and public health programs are all hemorrhaging. That's why California is in crisis and turmoil. Disaster is hard to avoid with a governor who will sell out the state for a few million dollars in campaign contributions.



California politics are more than just a sensational news story, a drama worthy of daytime television. As the nation turns its eyes toward the Golden State, it should see not only headlines and lead stories, but a cautionary tale.

Incarceration is one of the biggest and fastest growing industries of the 21st century. Prison lobbies, like the CCPOA, have become extremely powerful. The CCPOA alone has spent at least \$9.6 million since 1998 putting politicians like Gray Davis in its pocket. Similar lobbies are active at every level of government, across the country.

As the national economy continues to struggle, every state will be looking to make significant and difficult cuts. If California teaches us anything, it is that, before states cut valuable programs, they should cut their strings to the prison lobbies. Otherwise, they may follow California's disastrous lead into crisis and turmoil. ■

Attorney Van Jones is founder and director of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. He is presently on unpaid leave, working as the Grassroots Director for the Arianna Huffington for Governor campaign. He has played a key role in developing the campaign's "Schools Not Jails" platform.

IN SHORT

BY JESSICA WHITE

Progressives Take Action to Unseat Bush

Environmentalists, minorities, feminists, and other progressives tend to work separately, but if there's one thing capable of pulling these groups together, it's the possibility of four more years with Bush.

Americans Coming Together (ACT) is a recently formed left-leaning coalition planning to spend \$75 million during the upcoming campaign season to not only oust Bush, but "elect progressive officials at every level in 2004."

Focusing on 17 key states, ACT will fund voter education, registration drives, and advertisements.

The group is not affiliated with a political party, permitting more latitude when it comes to fundraising. Under the new campaign finance law, political parties can only accept a limited dollar amount from one source.

Exceeding that limit, one of the leading contributors, multibillionaire George Soros, has already pledged \$10 million to ACT.

In a written statement Soros said, "ACT is an effective way to mobilize civil society, to convince people to go to the polls and vote for candidates who will reassert the values of the greatest open society in the world."

The group will fall short, however, in matching the funds Bush is likely to generate for his campaign. By November, the Bush team expects to have raised \$170 million.

But ACT is not alone in its quest to unseat Bush. Other groups not affiliated with political parties have joined the cause. Karen Ackerman, political director of the AFL-CIO, said the "earliest and biggest" campaign the organization has ever taken on is underway to educate and register voters and ensure that Bush will not serve a second term.

Though some observers have suggested Howard Dean is pulling ahead in the race, no clear Democratic frontrunner has emerged. For now, the activists can focus on who they want out of office, even if they have not yet agreed on who to put in.

A Fine Mess

The cost of civil disobedience

By Ana Hristova

It has been almost four months since President George W. Bush declared an end to major military operations in Iraq. But it seems that another conflict, one that started much earlier, has emerged about the region.

An undisclosed number of individuals and groups have started receiving notices of penalties for violating the U.S. embargo that prohibits travel and imposes regulations on import and export with the war-torn country.

In late July, a summons arrived at the office of Voices in the Wilderness (VitW), notifying the group that the government seeks to collect \$20,000 in fines for two 1998 violations of sanctions against unlicensed import of humanitarian aid. This is not the first penalty imposed on the organization. In 1998, VitW was fined \$120,000 and four of its member received individual fines of \$10,000.

Under sanctions imposed in 1990 by President George Bush and extended by President George W. Bush through August 2004, it is illegal to export any goods or technology to Iraq. According to Iraqi Sanctions Regulations, persons and organizations determined by the Secretary of the Treasury to be doing so have been treated as if they were the government of Iraq itself. Criminal penalties range up to 12 years in prison and \$1,000,000 in fines, plus late fees and interest.

While William P. Quigley, who legally represents VitW, has requested an extension of the 20-day response time frame required by the government, Kathy Kelly, a founder of the organization and three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee, is not wasting time calculating the money owed.

"We will never pay the penalty," says Kelly, who has traveled to Iraq about 20 times since the organization started sending delegations in 1996. "We believe that it is wrongful to create laws that regulate people's ability to extend the hand of friendship to other people, particularly in a situation where following bombardments of Iraqi infrastructure, we imposed the most inhumane state of seizure in modern history."



Voices in the Wilderness argues that sanctions have caused unnecessary deaths of Iraqi civilians.

Kelly, who was packing for another trip to Iraq with fellow members John Farrell from Chicago, Ed Kinaue from Syracuse and Cathy Breen from New York, is mystified by the government's motives.

"We speculated about whether or not this was just the bureaucracy taking its course but when they went after the human shields as well, they made us wonder if there wasn't some kind of a political motivation to create intimidation," she said.

Instead of intimidation, VitW's run-ins with the government have created positive publicity that has helped the organization's outreach and education programs. The organization issued a call for 20,000 "voices of support" that generated 6,300 signatures in the first week alone. Several of those days included the blackouts in the Northeast. In addition, more than 50 people have sent letters to the Office of Foreign Assets Control.

"Enforcement actions are pretty routine," says Treasury spokesman Taylor Griffin. "Freedom of speech is a cornerstone of American democracy, but which law to obey or ignore is not a privilege." VitW is the only organization, according to Griffin, that is facing legal actions for violating the Iraqi sanctions. In addition, the Treasury Department has contacted a handful of individuals, including human shields, with a request for more details about their trips to the country. "Prison time is not a collection mechanism," he added. "In none of those cases criminal measures are being considered."

"Whatever the government motives, they are entitled to enforce the law," says Douglass W. Cassel Jr., director of the Center for International Human Rights at Northwestern University. "The risk of knowingly engaging in civil disobedience is that the government will enforce its law, and no one who traveled to Iraq should now be surprised by the consequences."

Farrell, who was just about to leave for Iraq for the first time, is not concerned about retribution. According to him, breaking an unjust law is not a violation because he doesn't consider it a law. "What concerns me more is the hypocrisy that the government would spend its resources and time to try to prosecute [VitW] for delivering small amounts of humanitarian aid. At the same time they haven't given reparations to the families of the civilians who were killed." ■

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Military Families Against the War

Millions of Americans are anxious about and even opposed to the American war on Iraq and to the bloody occupation that has followed it. But for Stan Goff, it's personal.

A career soldier and Vietnam veteran, Goff is an organizer of Bring Them Home Now, a fledgling movement of hundreds of relatives of U.S. troops in Iraq who say their family members in uniform are being made to fight an illegal and immoral war.

Goff is also the parent of one of those soldiers, a son who just last month was sent into Iraq to work as an army mechanic. "My son wrote an e-mail back that he's already been under attack by mortars twice," says Goff.

Bring Them Home Now is the combined project of two anti-war organizations—Military Families Speak Out and Veterans for Peace—and has seen its membership soar to more than 700 families over the course of the Iraq war. Because its members have relatives at risk in that conflict, the group poses perhaps one of the biggest threats to the Bush/Cheney/Rumsfeld war axis in Washington.

In These Times spoke with the now-retired Master Sergeant Goff by phone at his office with North Carolina Waste Awareness and Reduction Network, an environmental organization based in Durham.

What has the response been to an organization of anti-war soldiers' families?

Since I got out of the army in 1996, I've never seen anything catch fire like this. It sort of started out with that idiotic comment by George Bush in early July taunting the Iraqi guerrillas with the phrase "Bring 'em on." I wrote a piece condemning that statement in *Counterpunch* and got thousands of responses to it. Forty percent of them were veterans or military families, and they overwhelmingly supported my criticism of Bush. This is especially impressive because a lot of military families feel that there is a risk in speaking out.

What are they afraid of?

Soldiers in uniform do not have the First Amendment freedom to criticize their superior officers about war-related matters, and that

goes right up to the Commander-in-Chief. The families, of course, have their First Amendment freedom, but the reality is that the officer and enlisted personnel management systems control a soldier's career, and they can be



Stan Goff: Bring the troops home now.

extremely subjective. One bad line in your file can ruin your career.

Why are we seeing such a movement among military families with this conflict?

We're not saying bring the troops home because they're suffering hardship and danger. Most soldiers know that hardship and danger are part of their job. What we're saying is bring the troops home because they are facing hardship and danger in a war that is immoral and illegal.

The thing is, most of the kids that are over there believed what they were told, that they'd be greeted as liberators, like the allies marching into Paris. Instead it was like marching into Mogadishu. So now they and their families are asking why are they there subjecting themselves to 120 degree temperatures and daily attacks if [Iraqis] don't want them there?

Are you being harassed by the government? Do you worry that you will be?

There are some people who try to call us whiners. But really there has been no official harassment. It would be incredibly foolish for

the administration to retaliate against us. ... We have a sort of immunity from being charged with being bad Americans, and it's an identity we guard carefully.

Do you feel like this is Vietnam all over again?

In some ways it's similar, and in some ways it's very different. The terrain is different, and you don't have the Cold War underlying it, though the Bush Administration seems to be trying hard to create a new global enemy like that.

What is happening that is similar is that, in order to limit the casualties, which are raising the level of concern at home, the Pentagon has essentially shut down all operations. The troops have been pulled back behind the wire into hardened bases. The problem with that is that when you pull back, you hand the countryside over to the enemy, and then the static positions set you up as targets, which are under surveillance by the guerrillas.

It's a classic no-win situation for the United States now, with the Iraqis executing a classic guerrilla strategy of going after the softer targets like the United Nations and the pipelines, and I frankly don't see how we get out of it.

That sounds pretty pessimistic.

I'm an optimist really, though. Maybe a short-term pessimist but a long-term optimist. You know, the government can spin, spin, spin, like with [U.S. occupation coordinator L. Paul] Bremer saying over and over that we're "turning the corner." But eventually reality reasserts itself.

I think that the Bush Administration will collapse from its own hubris. You know, [Defense Secretary Donald] Rumsfeld is not the smart guy people in the media say he is. He is a fool who thinks he's smarter than his generals. He has an outrageous faith in technology's ability to solve military problems, and he seems to have Bush firmly in tow. But they're in a box. They're in the process of self-destruction.

The problem is that when it's over, we'll have a whole bunch of damaged people coming home sick, lame, and crazy. All I want is for my son to come home in the same condition that he left in. ■

THE FIRST

By Joel Bleifuss

James Watt of the 21st Century

J. Steven Griles has taken his skills as a corporate shill for the energy industry to the Interior Department. There, as second in command to Secretary Gale Norton, he is "advancing the Bush administration's assault on our public lands," says Adam Werbach, who made a political name for himself in 1996 by becoming president of the Sierra Club at the age of 23.

Today, Werbach works as executive director of Common Assets Defense Fund, an organization he founded to stop giveaways of public assets. He has set his sights on Griles as the person who best exemplifies all that is wrong with the Bush administration's environmental policies.

Griles is a former employee of the oil and gas lobbying firm National Environmental Strategies, which is currently paying him \$284,000 a year as part of a \$1.1 million buyout of his client base. Those clients include more than 40 coal, oil, gas, and electric companies and trade associations—the same corporate interests he is currently serving by leading administration efforts to weaken the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act and to expand mining and drilling on public lands.

During his confirmation hearings, Griles recused himself from lobbying for his former clients, yet he has continued to promote their anti-environment agendas. For example, according to documents released under the Freedom of Information Act, Griles has held 14 meetings on mountaintop-removal coal mining with industry officials, despite having previously lobbied on behalf of six coal companies and the National Mining Association. And he has held 32 meetings about offshore oil drilling with industry officials, despite having lobbied



ROGER L. WOLLENBERG / UPI

J. Steven Griles exemplifies what is wrong with the Bush administration.

bied on behalf of six offshore drilling companies and the American Gas Association.

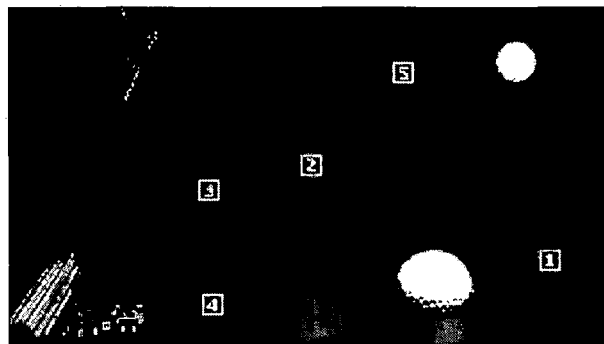
Griles is not new to controversy. During the Reagan administration, Griles served in the Interior Department where he was involved in a shady deal to sell the mineral rights to 17,000 acres of federal land to a private company for \$42,000. The company turned around and sold those rights for a \$37 million profit.

Borrowing the strategy of the campaign to remove Reagan's Interior Secretary James Watt, Werbach has begun a Web-based campaign, www.firegriles.com, to collect petitions and force Griles out of

office. "This man has got to go. Griles is serving corporate interests rather than the people's interests," says Werbach. "People think Bush is bad on the environment, but they can't cite an example. Griles is that example."

Heavenly Profits

The U.S. dominance in "near space" not only helps guarantee total global control, it guarantees huge profits for weapons corporations (see "Rods from God"). In April, several thousand Pentagon space warriors and space industry executives gathered in Colorado Springs for the 19th Annual Space Symposium. "Transforming the Future" was the theme of the symposium, which included workshops such as "The Role of Space in Homeland Defense and Homeland Security" and "Views from the Top—a CEO Roundtable." The latter program included presentations by some of the leaders of the 19 "major U.S. space companies" that co-sponsored the symposium, including Boeing, Lockheed Martin and



(1) Radar detects missile (2) Signal sent to satellite (3) HQ notified (4) Defense missile launched (5) Incoming missile destroyed

Northrop Grumman. According to a press release promoting the event, "With billions of dollars in business-to-business space deals struck each year at the conference, the National Space Symposium places heavy emphasis on executive networking." Indeed, according to a press release, in 2002 "space industry revenues are expected to rocket past the \$145 billion mark."

Dark Force

Dennis Halliday, the former U.N. assistant secretary-general and U.N. humanitarian co-ordinator in Iraq, has said that the United Nations has been taken over by the United States and turned into a "dark joke" and a "malignant force."

Halliday, who was nominated for the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize, spoke with the *Sunday Herald* of Scotland, after a truck bomb exploded at the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, killing many of his friends. He said:

The West sees the U.N. as a benign organization, but the sad reality in much of the world is that the U.N. is not seen as benign. The U.N. Security Council has been taken over and corrupted by the U.S. and the U.K., particularly with regard to Iraq, Palestine, and Israel. In Iraq, the U.N.-imposed sustained sanctions probably killed up to 1 million people. Children were dying of malnutrition and water-borne diseases. The U.S. and U.K. bombed the infrastructure in 1991, destroying power, water, and sewage systems against the Geneva Conventions. It was a great crime against Iraq. Thirteen years of sanctions made it impossible for Iraq to repair the damage. That is why we have such tremendous resentment and anger against the U.N. in Iraq. There is a sense that the U.N. humiliated the Iraqi people and society. I would use the term genocide to define the use of sanctions against Iraq. Several million Iraqis are suffering cancers because of the use of depleted uranium shells. That's an atrocity. Can you imagine the bitterness from all of this. ... Bush has blown \$75 billion on this war, so he should spend \$75 billion on reconstruction—and the money shouldn't just go to Halliburton and the boys either. ... Bush and Blair have misled their countries into war. By invading Iraq and placing the U.S. inside the Islamic world, America is inviting terrorists to come on the attack.

Cease and Desist

As Attorney General John Ashcroft began his national tour to promote the "Victory Act"—the Vital Interdiction of Criminal Terrorist Organizations Act of 2003, presidential candidate Howard Dean released the following statement:

After September 11, the Ashcroft Justice Department took advantage of the climate of fear and adopted a series of anti-terror tactics that go far beyond protecting our country and erode the rights of average Americans. We should be rolling these back, but instead Ashcroft is trying to build on them with his "Victory Act" proposal. He must not be allowed to compromise our freedoms any further. I call on Attorney General Ashcroft to withdraw this dangerous piece of legislation.

Will North Korea Be Next?

James Woolsey, a former CIA director and current senior advisor to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, has revealed that the United States has developed a plan to invade North Korea, knock out the Yongbyon nuclear facility, and topple the regime of Kim Jong Il, whom President Bush recently called a "pig."

Woolsey and Thomas McNerney, a retired Air Force lieutenant general, write in the *Wall Street Journal*:

Massive air power is the key to being able both to destroy Yongbyon and to protect South Korea from attack by missile or artillery. ... We believe the use of air power in such a war would be swifter and more devastating than it was in Iraq. ... We judge that the U.S. and South Korea could defeat North Korea decisively in 30 to 60 days with such a strategy.

The invasion of North Korea, according to their plan, would entail the deployment of two U.S. Army divisions to bolster Korean forces, a call up of the National Guard and Reserve units, 4,000 daily air strikes, and the deployment of cruise missiles and stealth bombers to take out Pyongyang's nuclear facilities.

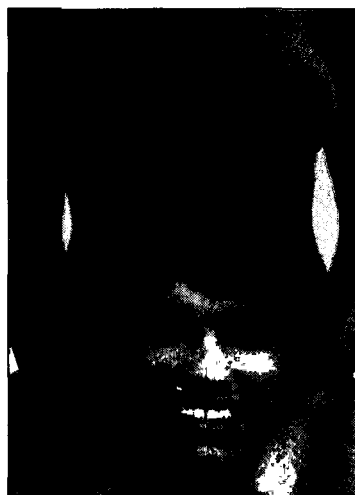
Like in Iraq, the *raison d'être* of this war would be to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction, i.e. the sale of North Korea's weapons-grade plutonium to "rogue states" and terrorists. Woolsey and McNerney write, "The world has weeks to months, at most, to deal with this issue, not months to years." Echoing their sentiments, former Defense Secretary William Perry told the *Washington Post*, "The nuclear program now under way in North Korea poses an imminent danger of nuclear weapons being detonated in American cities."

One of the drawbacks of bombing nuclear facilities is that the resulting explosions and meltdowns could spew radiation across East Asia and around the world. Woolsey and McNerney acknowledge that danger and say that precision bombs would "minimize radiation leakage." But they don't say how.

Tits or Ass?

California GOP gubernatorial candidate Arnold Schwarzenegger is elusive when it comes to staking out controversial political positions. Yet, despite appearances to the contrary, like this photo, his preferences *vis-a-vis* the female anatomy are clear. A video taken in Brazil shows Schwarzenegger grabbing the cheeks of a

scantily clad dancer and pulling her toward him as she tries to escape his two handed grip. "Yeah, Americans like breasts—no, no," says Schwarzenegger in the video. "After watching mulattas shake it, I can totally understand why Brazil is devoted to my favorite body part, the ass." Though that video was shot prior to his marriage to Maria Shriver, his public display of that predilection remains unchanged. "When he was



promoting *Terminator 3* in London," writes Wendy Leigh in the *London Evening Standard*, "TV cameras caught him putting his hand on co-star Kristanna Loken's bottom while they waved to the crowds from the balcony of the Odeon Leicester Square. Maria was close by." Where is Ken Starr now? ■

The Devil and Daniel Pipes

By Salim Muwakkil

The Bush administration's war on terrorism has done little so far but increase the ranks of potential terrorists. And while this may seem to be the regrettable result of a bumbling foreign policy, there are signs the administration is deliberately trying to antagonize the Islamic world; there seems to be method to its madness.

After a few bellicose statements about "crusades" early on, Bush's public soundbites have consistently portrayed Islam as a peaceful religion that has been "hijacked" by the forces of terrorism. But his official policies have done little to mark that distinction. The latest White House affront to Muslims is the recess appointment of Daniel Pipes to the board of directors of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

The Institute is a quasi-governmental think tank dedicated to international "peace and conflict resolution." It was created to help build bridges between cultures and, since 9/11, one of its most pressing projects has been the Special Initiative on the Muslim World.

Pipes is director of the Middle East Forum, a right-wing think tank based in Philadelphia, a prolific author of anti-Islamic screeds and creator of Campus Watch, a Web site that monitors professors who criticize Israel. He has a long paper trail, and perusal of Pipes' oeuvre reveals two clear positions: He is strongly pro-Israel and avidly anti-Muslim.

His appointment is opposed by a number of Islamic, Christian, Jewish, and interfaith groups, all of which argue that Pipes is better at building barriers than bridges to the Islamic world. A number of editorial boards, including the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Washington Post*, also have urged the administration to rescind his appointment.

Pipes gained some public infamy in May 1995, when he told *USA Today* that the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was "just the beginning" of an offensive by Islamic fundamentalists. Many journalists already had learned to be wary of Pipes' biased analysis of issues concerning the Middle East or Islam.

"Pipes has repeatedly demonstrated hostility toward Arabs and toward Islam as a religion," says Mitchell Plitnick, co-director of the San Francisco-based Jewish Voice for Peace, one of several Jewish organizations that have mobilized against him. "Of equal concern is that Pipes has often espoused the view that force is the most appropriate solution to the problems in the Middle East and the Muslim world.



It seems odd that the administration would go out of its way to nominate such a belligerent and divisive voice to an organization seeking peaceful solutions. If the Bushites are trying to provoke the Muslim world, however, naming Pipes makes sense.

Such a motive would also explain why the Bush administration initially chose retired Lt. Gen. Jay Garner as the first administrator of U.S. operations in Iraq. Garner is president of SY Coleman Technologies, a firm that, among other things, helped develop Israel's Arrow missile system. He is a leading weapons manufacturer who was posing as a man of peace.

Garner also has a cozy relationship with Israel's right wing, particularly the Jewish Institute for Security Affairs (JINSA). He visited Israel in 1998 on a trip sponsored by JINSA. He also signed a JINSA-sponsored statement that praised Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for exercising "remarkable restraint in the face of lethal violence orchestrated by the leaders of a Palestinian Authority."

Even if Garner were a competent administrator (he wasn't), his support for Israel's right wing and the widely reviled Sharon should have instantly disqualified

him as custodian of an Islamic nation in need of reassurance and reconstruction. Garner proved to be an embarrassment and was quickly replaced by career diplomat L. Paul Bremer. But why did the Bush administration name such a polarizing figure in the first place?

Perhaps it did if for the same reason Bush's Defense Department invited the Rev. Franklin Graham, son of evangelist Billy Graham, to deliver the 2003 Good Friday homily at the Pentagon. Franklin Graham is one of a number of prominent evangelical preachers and Bush supporters who have embarked on a freewheeling, Islam-bashing spree: He calls Islam a "very evil and wicked religion" bent on "world domination." Many Islamic groups and Muslim employees of the Defense Department frantically urged the Pentagon chaplain's office to disinvite the Islamophobic clergyman, but to no avail. Graham's invitation was an astringent irritant to Muslim sensibilities, utterly unfathomable—unless it was intended to offend.

The Bush administration seemingly has

If the Bushites are trying to provoke the Muslim world, the appointment of Daniel Pipes makes sense.

done all it could to offend Muslims and increase the allure of "jihadists" like Osama bin Laden, who argue that the West is inherently offensive to Islam. The military invasion of Iraq has unleashed forces of religious fervor that also feed jihadist passions. Many young Muslims now will be taught that secular ideologies are unable to protect Islamic lands from crusading imperialists.

The U.S. "victory" provides a ready argument to help recruit young people into groups like al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad. This is one component of the "clash of civilizations" long predicted by the neocons now running foreign policy. And right before our eyes, they are transforming that prediction into a self-fulfilling prophecy. ■

Third World, Here We Come

By Susan J. Douglas

How, like, totally embarrassing. In the wake of the big blackout, critics charged that the United States has a "Third World" power grid. Third World! News stories featured Iraqis giving us advice about how to survive with zero or, at best, intermittent power. Now we're hearing how our roads, bridges, and water pipes are also "Third World," while we struggle to rid our computers of worms and viruses.

But here's what's been missing from these stories: this is Team Bush's overarching goal (well, in addition to bullying the entire planet)—to turn the United States into a Third World country. There will be a hill someplace, as there are in so many developing countries, where Bush and his 122 really rich friends will live in a gated compound. Down below will be everyone else. Roosevelt had his New Deal, Johnson The Great Society, and Team Bush has Third World Wonderland. Ah, utopia.

Now, here's my hunch. Someone in the White House—my guess is Dubya himself—has looked at certain world rankings, seen how various Third Worlders are beating us out on the immiseration front, and said, "Dammit, we can do better than that!" I mean, really, this can be the only explanation for why, in the wake of 9/11, Bush and the House Republicans nixed an energy bill that would have provided funds for upgrading said electrical grid. (I know, they wanted to drill in Alaska, but that's part of Third World dreamin'—trash whatever open acreage you have left.)

Take rates of deforestation as a start. By the late 1990s, Brazil was the world's top deforester (not without help from major U.S. interests), followed by Indonesia and Bolivia. We weren't even in the top 40! Worse than that, the United States between 1990 and 1995 was the world's top reforester. Team Bush can't have that: time to turn all our parks and wilderness areas over to the logging interests and call it a "healthy forests" initiative, just like Idi Amin might have done. The news is even more hopeful when you get to water pollution: in emissions of organic pollutants, only China beats us—we beat

India! With the just-leaked news that Team Bush plans to allow thousands of older power plants, factories and oil refineries to upgrade without installing any new anti-pollution devices, we can get there from here. We can!

Then there's education. Are we really going to let Niger rank number one as the least literate country with the lowest enrollment in primary schools?



(Thinking that our foreign aid money could help such countries educate their kids instead of using it to launch wars is so "New Frontier." Team Bush says, "If you won't help them, join them.")

Dismantling Head Start as a federal program would help us catch up. Only three out of five preschoolers who are eligible for Head Start can get in the program anyway, so it won't take much

to get the number down to zero. Terminating after-school programs that serve 500,000 kids is also crucial to moving up in the rankings, so Bush is all over this one. And with so many of the states laying off teachers and shortening the school year, we may soon be able to give Kuwait and Uzbekistan a run for their money.

But why, asks Team Bush, should our kids be only inadequately educated when they could be poor and unnecessarily sick too, like in Zambia? The child poverty rate is on the rise again, and in some U.S. counties, three out of five kids are poor. In some cities, 40 percent of kids are poor (you'd think it of Brownsville, Texas, but not Providence, Rhode Island.) Team Bush knows how to move this along—cut Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance

Program in America. Our child poverty rate now exceeds that of Turkey.

We aren't going to stop there, are we? What about infant mortality, a great index of Third Worldism? In 2001, our rates were worse than those of South Korea, Slovenia, Malta, Singapore and Greece. We can improve on this, too, if more people lose—or never get—health insurance, and if we slash prenatal care for poor women even more.

But the true mark of a Third World country is that it is run by a small, wealthy elite, has barely any middle class, and tons of poor people. By 2000, the 400 wealthiest taxpayers had seen their income quadruple since 1992, while their tax burden plummeted. But there are still too many middle class people around. Not to worry—maybe Team Bush can privatize Social Security, a ton of pension funds, and Medicare can be "privatized." Or, hell, just do them in, while eliminating estate taxes on the rich. And 2.5 million jobs have already evaporated under the Third World Wonderland plan. Why let Colombia hog the number-one spot-

Team Bush's overarching goal—in addition to bullying the entire planet—is to turn the United States into a Third World country.

light with lowest percent of the population in the workforce?

Third World countries also often have few civil rights, limited free speech, and high police surveillance of dissidents and intellectuals. Thankfully we have John Ashcroft to handle that side of things.

So let's not hear anymore shocked discussion about our "Third World" power grid when it is clearly part of a grander, bolder vision. Just think of where we can be 20 years from now, even 10, if we can have the infant mortality rate of Afghanistan, the unemployment rate of Macedonia, the nitrogen oxide emissions of Mexico City, the infectious disease rate of Ecuador, and, yes, a power grid just like the one we've helped make in Iraq. ■

Power to the People

By Dennis Kucinich

With an estimated 50 million Americans and Canadians having been left without power (and in some cases water) in August, common sense requires us to reflect on the absurdity of deregulation of public utilities. The right of utility franchise is vested in the people. We give utilities permission to operate, and enable them to set up a profit-making business in exchange for the promise of affordable and reliable service.

In 1992, investor-owned utilities pushed the Democratic House to pass HR776, which granted electric utilities broad powers. The bill was supposed to restructure the electric utility industry and thus spur competition.

But utilities used deregulation to facilitate a series of mergers that limited competition. In order to increase profits, the utilities cut costs by laying off thousands of employees, including some who maintained the generation, transmission, and distribution systems. A number of utilities stopped investing in the maintenance and repair of their own equipment in order to cut costs and enhance the value of their stock.

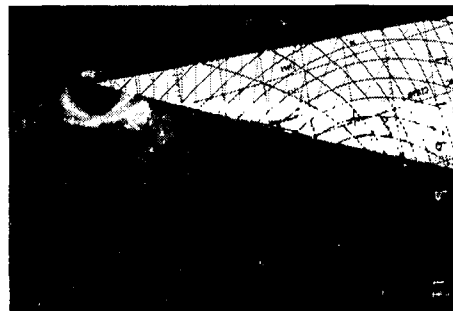
A case in point is FirstEnergy Corp., which was formed through a merger of utility companies that owned nuclear power plants, including The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company (CEI).

If there was ever an example of an unholy alliance between government and industry, it is found in the government's failure to regulate problem-plagued FirstEnergy. Now, according to published reports, the blackout that affected an estimated 50 million people most likely began when a FirstEnergy system ignored existing regulations and failed to isolate its malfunctioning grid.

I've been familiar with FirstEnergy and the challenge of utility monopolies for more than 30 years. Early in my career, in the '70s, I watched CEI try to put the city's publicly owned system, Muny Light, out of business. Muny Light competed against CEI in a third of the city and provided municipal power customers with savings on their electric bill of 20 to 30 percent. It also provided cheaper electric-

ity for 76 city facilities and thousands of Cleveland street lights, saving taxpayers millions of dollars each year.

An antitrust review by the Justice Department revealed that CEI had committed numerous violations of federal antitrust law in its attempt to put the city utility out of business. CEI worked behind the scenes to block Muny Light from purchasing power from other power companies. CEI became the only power



company Muny Light could buy electricity from, which sharply increased Muny Light's costs.

As a result, Muny Light began to lose money and CEI used this weakened condition as evidence of the public system's lack of viability and as proof that the only way the people of Cleveland could have reliable power was for the city to sell its electric system to CEI. Throughout this period, the Cleveland media, which received substantial advertising revenues from CEI, crusaded against the city's ownership of a municipal electric system.

In 1976, after years of work to undermine Muny Light, CEI finally succeeded in getting the mayor and the council of Cleveland to agree to sell the utility. At that time, I was clerk of the Cleveland Municipal Court, a citywide elected office. I organized a civic campaign to save this city asset. People gathered signatures in freezing rain to block the sale. I ran for mayor of Cleveland on a promise that if elected, my first act would be to cancel the sale of Muny Light. I won the election. I canceled the sale.

The Muny Light issue came to a head

on December 15, 1978, when Ohio's largest bank, Cleveland Trust, told me that they would not renew the city's credit on \$15 million worth of loans taken out by the previous administration unless I would agree to sell Cleveland's municipally owned utility to CEI.

Concurrently, the sale of Muny Light was being promoted by both Cleveland newspapers, virtually all of the radio and TV stations in town, the entire business community, all the banks, both political parties and several unions, as well as a majority of the Cleveland city council. I said no to the sale of Muny Light, and Cleveland Trust put the City of Cleveland into default. Later, it was revealed that Cleveland Trust and CEI had four interlocking directors, that Cleveland Trust was CEI's bank, and that Cleveland Trust owned a substantial share of CEI stock.

Public power was saved in Cleveland. But I lost the election in 1979, and the default was the major issue.

In 1993, the City of Cleveland announced that it was expanding Muny Light, now known as Cleveland Public

After deregulation, some utilities stopped investing in maintenance and repair to cut costs and enhance the value of their stock.

Power, in what was the largest expansion of any municipal electric system in America. People in Cleveland began to say that I was right not to sell their utility and I ran for the state senate in 1994 on the slogan "because he was right" with little rays of yellow light shining behind my name on my campaign signs. I was one of the few Democrats to unseat a Republican incumbent that year in a state election. In 1996, I was one of the few Democrats to unseat a Republican incumbent and win election to Congress. My campaign signs had a light bulb behind my name with the words "Light up Congress."

Today, I'm running for president. I want to light up America, and a good place to start will be to shed light on a deregulation process that has abandoned the public interest. ■



Letter from Baghdad

The Progress of Disaster

By Christian Parenti

The air in Baghdad is potent stuff. Plastic-rich garbage heaps burn in empty lots. Massive diesel generators run round the clock. More than a million vehicles—old cars, trucks and fuel-guzzling U.S. tanks—creep through the streets belching fumes. On the horizon, beyond the looted and bombed out office blocks, looming above the low-rise residential sprawl, is a giant smokestack; its massive black plume hangs over the city constantly. Add to this haze the soot of building fires, the stench of sewage, and the ubiquitous dust from countless rubble heaps; then cap and seal the mixture with the 115-degree hostility of a desert sun.

But forget the poisonous air. The really pressing issue in Baghdad is escalating *chaos*. The 6 million people living here want electricity, water, telecommunications, and security. As of yet they have none of these in sufficient supply. On the ground it seems that this American adventure is spinning out of control. Most Iraqis want peace, but a terrorist war of resistance requires only a small and determined minority.

Here the criminal is king. Saddam emptied the prisons and the United States disbanded the police, while 60 percent of people are unemployed. As a result, carjacking, robbery, looting, and murder are rife. Marauding men in "misery gangs" kidnap and rape women and girls at will. Some of these victims are dumped back on the streets only to be executed by their "disgraced" male relatives in what are called "honor killings."

Many women and girls stay locked inside their homes for weeks at a time. And increasingly those who do venture out wear veils, as the misogynist threats and ravings of the more fundamentalist Shia and Sunni clerics have warned that women who do not wear the *hijab* should not be protected.

American troops have little understanding of Iraqi culture or politics. At crime scenes, they can just as easily arrest the victims as the perpetrators.

According to the city morgue, there were 470 fatal shootings in July, up from 10 the year before. Not surprisingly, most people in Baghdad are armed and edgy. Under such conditions community solidarity takes on strange forms. Irish peace activist Michael Birmingham, who works with Voices in the Wilderness, witnessed the new vigilantism first hand.

Three carjackers took a vehicle in midday. In response, the crowd on the streets started throwing stones while shopkeepers started firing AK-47s. Before long the crowd had dragged one of the carjackers out onto the street and started beating him. "They were jumping on his head and his chest. I don't think he made it," explains Birmingham in a deadpan Dublin brogue.

As for the American troops—whom Iraqis call the *kuwat al-ihital*, or forces of occupation—they are stretched too thin to deal effectively with such crimes. And they have little understanding of Iraqi culture or politics. They are adrift in a sea of unintelligible Arabic, where even the street names are a mystery. At crime scenes they can just as easily arrest the victims as the perpetrators. Their small convoys are under constant assault.

Officially there are, on average, 13 attacks on Coalition Forces in Baghdad every day. Since May 1, when the war "ended," more than 404 U.S. soldiers have been permanently removed from action due to wounds, while more than 60 have been killed in attacks.

I relay these numbers to a grunt in the field, a young GI with the first armored division. He has no clear picture of how the counter-insurgency war is going other than that someone shot at the gate he is guarding a while back and missed. But he's sure of one thing. "Whatever they tell you is a lie. It is bullshit. They're camouflaging."

Even journalists are getting killed. A Reuters photographer, Mazen Dana, was recently taken out by U.S. troops. Before that, a young British freelancer named Richard Wild was murdered by an assassin who probably thought his victim was a soldier. Three GIs had died the same way: at close range, in the neck, from behind, with a pistol.

May Ying Walsh—a stellar American reporter who now works for Al Jazeera—was almost killed, as she recounts with an air of blank serenity. “I was interviewing some soldiers and a grenade fell right in between us, like a ripe piece of fruit. Everyone ran, but I just froze. The grenade rolled under a Humvee and when it blew, somehow, the shrapnel missed me. I think I was behind the tire or something.” Her film crew and two GI’s were not so lucky; all of them were wounded, one of them very badly.

Baghdad also suffers from the less dramatic structural violence of epidemic poverty. War, sanctions, and Saddam’s greed have left a large destitute class with no work, medicine, or schooling. Exploring the rubble of some government ministry, two colleagues and I meet Ibrahim Kadum, who lost his foot in the Iran-Iraq war, then he lost his home and now squats in these ruins with his wife, nine children, and a shaggy and bleating ewe.

Kadum, who can’t work, says he lives off the meager wages of his children, some of whom do odd jobs in a local market. Mostly he survives on World Food Program donations of flour, legumes, oil, salt, sugar, and tea. These allotments feed 27 million and are a direct continuation of the oil-for-food program of Saddam’s era, which is scheduled to end in November. The scale and form of any new system is as yet unclear. As we talk, a bleary-eyed child approaches with a very realistic toy pistol and levels it at my colleague’s head.

At the Palestine Hotel, now a huge fortified camp where highly paid TV journalists are guarded by the razor wire and tanks of the U.S. Army, one can find yet more forms of the war’s violence and desperation.

A young woman, through a translator, explains the details of her work. She sells herself to American soldiers for \$15 a session. She’s seventeen, wants to go to college and leave Iraq.

“Do you use protection with the soldiers?”

She blushes and pauses. “She says she takes the pills,” explains our translator Ahmed. Does she know about AIDS? “No condoms?” I ask. She blushes even more deeply and answers directly in English. “Sometimes.”

In the center of this sprawling war zone is a clean and air-conditioned oasis, the Coalition Provisional Authority headquarters. Situated in one of Saddam Hussein’s old palaces—a huge complex of high-modernist trophy architecture—the CPA is where L. Paul Bremer III and his army of freshly minted MBAs brainstorm on vital topics like competitive bidding and privatization. Somewhere else in this fortress sits the Coalition’s hand-picked Interim Governing Council of Iraq.

Every afternoon at 3:00, the CPA’s spin-doctors address the press in a large auditorium. In Vietnam style, we call these con-



The GIs are no longer driving the situation but rather riding it.

fabrics “the follies.” The ritual begins with a slew of statistics about the “good progress” being made. But the numbers are often mumbled like a Latin mass, and one begins to feel that the driving force here is faith, not reason or planning.

“In the last 24 hours, coalition forces have detained 149 individuals, conducted over 1,000 patrols and 20 raids.” The pale and pudgy Col. Shields is presiding today. “We have confiscated 110

diesel-smuggling tanker trucks, and destroyed more than 20 IEDs [improvised explosive devices]. Coalition forces completed four civic action projects in the Basra area and ...” On and on it goes until the colonel gets stuck on the word *adjudicated*.

“Several of these cases will be ... edjuda-rated, that is educated, I mean ...”

Ask Shields how many Iraqis have been killed by U.S. troops and, despite his reams of stats, he doesn’t know. How many women raped by gangs? No number. How many U.S. soldiers committing suicide? Any troops busted for looting? Can’t say.

Then from the auditorium—a loud snore followed by snickering laughter. The *L.A. Times* man, just in from Jordan, has passed out cold. He didn’t nap last night during the dangerous 13-hour drive in and obviously the combination of Shield nattering on and the wonderful air-conditioning have had a powerful soporific effect.

Smoke is rising from Karrada Street, an electronics district popular with U.S. troops. An American humvee has just pulled up on the median and been blown to pieces by a remote activated mine.

The sidewalks are packed with refrigerators and air conditioning boxes. In the street sit a military transport truck and another humvee, beyond that are remains of the burning humvee. A few U.S. soldiers are crouched behind the truck.

There are two wounded GI’s on the ground and now a medic helicopter circles just overhead. But there’s no way the chopper can land because of overhead wires. An on and off firefight ensues for the next two hours until Bradley Fighting Vehicles start pounding the targeted building with 25-millimeter cannon shells. Whoever was inside has either left out the back or they are now definitely dead.

Two Iraqi civilians lie dead and one or two are wounded. A cigarette stand has been knocked down, its packs of smokes strewn on the street. An Iraqi shopkeeper leans on a wall and sobs as his store goes up in flames.

The GIs next to us among the refrigerators seem neither scared nor brave, just weary and numb. They are no longer driving the situation but rather riding it. And from this vantage point, crouching among the smashed merchandise and empty shell casings, one can feel the war taking on its own momentum. ■

Christian Parenti is the author of *The Soft Cage: Surveillance in America from Slavery to the War on Terror* (Basic Books, fall 2003). He recently returned from Baghdad.

WHO KNEW?

The unanswered questions of 9/11

BY SETH ACKERMAN

On July 24, Congress' joint intelligence panel finally released a declassified version of its inquiry into the 9/11 attacks. Described variously in the next day's press reports as "scathing," "damning," "harshly critical," and an "indictment" of White House secrecy, the report detailed a stunning series of failures by the CIA and FBI that led to the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

No one in the early post-9/11 months, when the panel was born, could have predicted how damaging its findings would eventually prove. Although the committee was established in defiance of the White House—President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney each personally asked Tom Daschle to limit any investigation to the regular intelligence committees—its work got off to an uninspiring start. Its first staff director, Britt Snider, resigned in April 2002 as committee members squabbled over the scope of the investigation. Expectations for the probe were low.

Fast Green ATM

9/10/01



8:41 pm

**UNO's Restaurant Parking Lot
280 Maine Mall Road
South Portland, ME**

How did the FBI know so quickly which Portland, Maine, ATM would turn up a videotape of 9/11 hijacker Mohammad Atta?

But the investigation was transformed a month before its first hearings were set to begin. In May 2002, a string of explosive leaks ignited a public debate over the government's handling of the 9/11 attacks and made the performance of the intelligence agencies a political issue. CBS reporter David Martin revealed that weeks before the attacks, the CIA had warned Bush personally of Osama Bin Laden's intent to use hijacked planes as missiles. That followed the damaging exposure by The Associated Press's John Solomon of a pre-9/11 FBI memo from an officer in Phoenix warning of suspicious Middle Eastern men training at flight schools—a warning that went unheeded.

The disclosures rocked the administration. "BUSH KNEW," blared the May 16, 2002 cover of the Murdoch-owned *New York Post*. A front-page headline in the *Washington Post* warned, "An Image of Invincibility Is Shaken by Disclosures." Even worse for Bush, the news set off an interagency war of press leaks over who was to blame for the mishaps, with each embarrassing leak from the CIA provoking a defensive counter-leak from the FBI. The result of the battle, which wore on through the summer, was polit-

ical misery for the White House.

By September 2002, Bush was forced to accept the one thing he had been desperately hoping to avoid: an independent blue-ribbon commission into the 9/11 attacks. The commission, as *Newsweek* put it, may turn out to be "the most far-reaching and explosive government inquiry in decades." Bush agreed to it only after a series of contentious White House meetings with families of 9/11 victims who were outraged over the summer's disclosures. Faced with this powerful new political force, the administration saw no way out. "There was a freight train coming down the tracks," one White House official said. The resulting National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, formally established in late 2002, will not release its final report until May 27, 2004.

In the meantime, the 858-page report of the congressional inquiry is the fullest official accounting to date of what went wrong with the government's handling of the 9/11 plot. The picture that emerges from its pages (and from information that didn't make it between its covers) entirely contradicts the administration's initial portrayal of how 9/11 happened: that a group of quietly efficient attackers slipped unnoticed into the United States and blended into an anonymous, open society, leaving the authorities no chance to pick up their trail—what Seymour Hersh, citing a former FBI counterintelligence official, has labeled "the superman scenario." Bush himself encapsulated this view two weeks after the attacks when he said: "These terrorists had burrowed in our country for over two years. They were well organized. They were well planned. They struck in a way that was unimaginable."

In reality, Hersh quotes a top CIA official as saying, the plotters "violated a fundamental rule of clandestine operations." Instead of "working independently and maintaining rigid communications security, the terrorists, as late as last summer, apparently mingled openly and had not yet decided which flights to target. The planning for September 11th appears to have been far more ad hoc than was at first assumed."

Moreover, the hijackers did not fly under the radar of the intelligence agencies. The agencies, it turns out, did in fact manage to spot—and even monitor—several of the 9/11 hijackers before they carried out the attacks, in some cases long before. Yet for reasons that so far remain a mystery, counterterrorism officials at FBI headquarters and the CIA consistently dropped the ball when it came to apprehending them—sometimes acting in ways that ran counter to standard practice, at times to the bafflement and anger of their colleagues.

It's a point that was underlined during a revealing exchange that took place at a recent meeting between senior FBI agents and relatives of 9/11 victims. At the meeting, Kristen Breitweiser, a widow of one of the dead, posed a question: "How is it that a

few hours after the attacks, the nation is brought to its knees, and miraculously FBI agents showed up at Embry-Riddle flight school in Florida where some of the terrorists trained?"

"We got lucky," was the reply, according to an account of the meeting by Gail Sheehy in the *New York Observer*.

Breitweiser then asked how the FBI had known exactly which Portland, Maine ATM machine would turn up a videotape of Mohammed Atta, the terrorist ringleader. "The agent got some facts confused, then changed his story," Sheehy reports. Finally, he asked Breitweiser: "What are you getting at?"

"I think you had open investigations before September 11 on some of the people responsible for the terrorist attacks," she said.

"We did not," insisted the agent.

Yet that is exactly what the evidence unearthed by the congressional investigators points to. If at one time it seemed as if catching the hijackers prior to the attacks would have been like finding a needle in a haystack—how could anyone have pinpointed 19 covert terrorists among 290 million Americans?—now the right question seems to be how the FBI and CIA failed to catch the terrorists when they were right under their noses.

Why Were Hijackers Left Off the Watchlist?

A key section of the congressional report tells the puzzling story of a pair of Saudi hijackers who settled in San Diego almost two years before the attacks. Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi were two of the terrorists aboard American Airlines Flight 77, which crashed into the Pentagon. In the report's judgment, their story represents "perhaps the intelligence community's best chance to unravel the September 11 plot."

The tale begins in late 1999, when counterterrorism agents working round-the-clock in preparation for the Millennium celebrations got wind that al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi, who had been connected to the 1998 East Africa bombings, were planning a trip to Malaysia. According to a CIA officer who testified to the committee, "a kind of tuning fork buzzed" when he and his colleagues heard the news. The CIA arranged for Malaysian intelligence to monitor the pair once they landed in Kuala Lumpur on January 5, 2000. Their behavior, CIA Director George Tenet testified, "was consistent with clandestine activity."

In Kuala Lumpur, the two men attended a high-level al-Qaeda meeting at the home of Yazid Sufaat, a Malaysian chemist with ties to the bin Laden network. Photographs of the gathering were taken secretly by Malaysian intelligence and transmitted back to CIA headquarters. By that time, the CIA had obtained a copy of al-Mihdhar's Saudi passport, giving the agency his full name, passport number, birth date and other details. The passport showed that al-Mihdhar had a visa, issued at the U.S. consulate in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, giving him the right to enter the United States at any time until the visa expired in April 2000.

Yet no action was taken to warn U.S. customs officials. According to Tenet, "We had at that point the level of detail needed to watchlist [al-Mihdhar]—that is, to nominate him to State Department for refusal of entry

into the US or to deny him another visa. Our officers remained focused on the surveillance operation and did not do so."

It got worse. In March, CIA headquarters received a cable from one of its own overseas stations informing them that shortly after attending the Malaysia meeting, al-Hazmi had boarded a plane and flown to Los Angeles, entering the United States on January 15, 2000. A message addressed to the CIA's bin Laden unit from a different station noted "with interest" the fact that "a member of this group traveled to the U.S. following his visit to Kuala Lumpur."

Despite the fact that al-Hazmi was already regarded as a "terrorist operative" by the intelligence agencies, again no action was taken—even though only three months earlier, CIA headquarters had sent a cable to all its bases reminding officers of the importance of watch-listing potential terrorists: Information on suspects need only "raise a reasonable suspicion that the individual is a possible terrorist," the reminder said.

It was in January 2001, while investigating the USS *Cole* bombing, that the CIA managed to identify one of the Malaysian plotters captured on film as Khallad bin Attash, a mastermind behind the *Cole* attack. "This was the first time that CIA could definitively place al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar with a known al-Qaeda operative," Tenet testified. In May, a CIA counterterrorism officer investigating the *Cole* case put in a request to dig up the year-old surveillance photos of the Malaysia meeting. He explained in an e-mail that he was interested "because Khalid al-Mihdhar's two companions also were couriers of a sort, who traveled between [the Far East] and Los Angeles at the same time." In other words, as the congressional report explains, "information about al-Hazmi's travel to the United States began to attract attention at CIA at least as early as May 18, 2001"—four months before the World Trade Center attacks.

All along, al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi were living openly in the San Diego area, using their real names on their California driver's licenses and rental agreements. Even more shocking, they



Why did U.S. intelligence agencies fail to track the hijackers who met with the mastermind of al-Qaeda's attack on the USS *Cole*?

had befriended and moved in with a prominent local Muslim leader, Abdussattar Shaikh, who, unbeknownst to them, was a long-time undercover FBI counterterrorism informant in regular contact with a terrorism case officer in the bureau's San Diego office. According to *Newsweek*, it was such a close encounter that "on one occasion the [FBI] case agent called up the informant and was told he couldn't talk because 'Khalid'—a reference to al-Mihdhar—was in the room."

The congressional investigators who prepared the report asked to talk to Shaikh, but, they explained, "the [Bush] Administration and the FBI have objected to the Joint Inquiry's request to interview the informant and have refused to serve a Committee subpoena and notice of deposition."

Another associate of the hijackers was Omar al-Bayoumi, a Saudi national living in San Diego. Al-Bayoumi, who fled the country shortly before 9/11, assisted al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi on various occasions. He co-signed their lease and paid their first month's rent and security deposit. According to the congressional report, al-Bayoumi "had access to seemingly unlimited

to May 2000, "U.S. agents followed him around the greater Frankfurt area and noted that he made purchases at numerous different drugstores and apothecaries and amassed a substantial amount of chemicals that could be used to construct a bomb." The German Staatschutz, or state security police, were not informed.

Like 9/11 widow Kristen Breitweiser, a German official quoted by *Focus* was struck by the FBI's amazingly detailed knowledge of Atta's history in the days immediately after 9/11: "Security experts are still dumbfounded, as they were at the time, by the speed with which the FBI was able to make a presentation to [German investigators] laying out the extremely conspiratorial connections between Atta and his alleged Hamburg accomplices. 'It was like all they had to do was push a button,' said one insider. 'It was as if the Americans had already amassed scads of information long before in their database about the perpetrator.'"

Particularly strange is that Atta received approval for his visa from the U.S. Embassy in Berlin on May 18, 2000, exactly when, as *Focus* put it, "his designated agent from the US secret service was observing his suspicious chemical buying." *Focus* quoted a

For reasons that so far remain a mystery, counterterrorism officials at the FBI and CIA consistently dropped the ball when it came to apprehending the hijackers—sometimes acting in ways that ran counter to standard practice.

funding from Saudi Arabia." In recent months, he has become the focus of intense scrutiny in Washington over his suspected links to Saudi intelligence.

On the day of his first meeting with the hijackers, at a Los Angeles restaurant, al-Bayoumi stopped by the Saudi consulate for a closed-door chat. Some law enforcement officials, according to *Newsweek*, believe he met there with Fahad al Thumairy, a member of the consulate's Islamic and Culture Affairs Section, who was later expelled from the United States for suspected links to terrorism. The congressional report cites the FBI's "best source" in San Diego as saying that al-Bayoumi "must be an intelligence officer for Saudi Arabia or another foreign power." A senior FBI official went further, telling *Newsweek*: "We firmly believed that he had knowledge [of the 9/11 plot], and that his meeting with [the hijackers] that day was more than coincidence."

It was only on August 23, 2001—three weeks before 9/11—that CIA officers reviewing their files on the year-and-a-half old Malaysia meeting made a decision to try to track down the Saudi militants. An alert was sent out to the FBI and other agencies to find the "bin Laden-related individuals" al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar. The search failed.

Who Was Watching? Who Was Stalling?

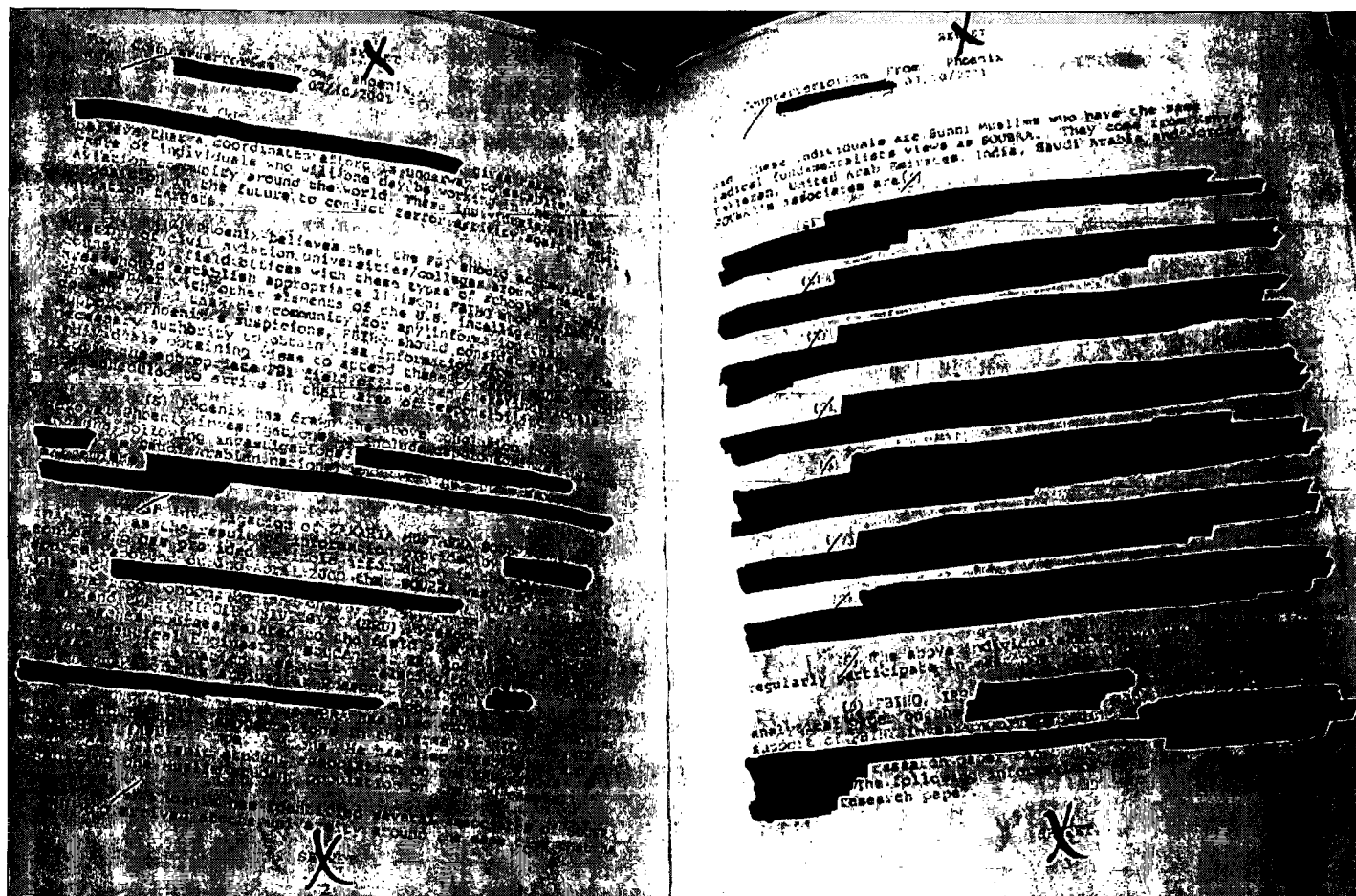
Allegations that another key hijacker, Mohammed Atta, was being watched by authorities before 9/11 went unaddressed by the congressional panel. On September 24, 2001, the German news-magazine *Focus* reported that Atta, the suspected terrorist ring-leader, was under FBI surveillance while he was living in Hamburg during the months before he moved to the United States. Sourced to German police investigators, *Focus* reported that from January

Staatschutz official who declared: "It can no longer be ruled out that the Americans kept their eye on Atta after his entry into the United States."

Perhaps that's not so far-fetched. On June 6, 2002 Knight Ridder revealed that the National Security Agency (NSA) was monitoring Mohammed Atta's phone calls while he was in the United States, and translated several conversations between Atta and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks who was apprehended in Pakistan last March. Some U.S. officials said the NSA failed to share the information with other intelligence agencies, though one official told Knight Ridder it was "simply not true" that the information was collected and not shared.

Not only are these episodes staggering intelligence failures in their own right, they also illustrate how crucial the FBI's mis-handling of a third case turned out to be—that of Zacarias Moussaoui, the supposed "20th hijacker." A French citizen of Moroccan descent, Moussaoui was arrested on immigration charges a month before 9/11 after a flight-school instructor in Minnesota, alarmed by his suspicious behavior and large cash payments, called the FBI. John Rosengren, the flight school's director of operations, feared that Moussaoui "could have been a hijacker who could have tried to take an airplane filled with passengers," according to the *New York Times*. "There was discussion of how much fuel was on board a 747-400 and how much damage that could cause if it hit anything."

According to a now-famous whistle-blowing memo from FBI agent Coleen Rowley, the agent who responded to the call "identified [Moussaoui] as a terrorist threat from a very early point." These suspicions, she wrote, "quickly ripened into prob-



What information about Saudi ties to the 9/11 plot was redacted from the congressional report?

able cause, which, at the latest, occurred within days of Moussaoui's arrest when the French Intelligence Service confirmed his affiliations with radical fundamentalist Islamic groups and activities connected to Osama bin Laden."

The agents became "desperate" to search Moussaoui's personal computer and other belongings. To do this, they needed permission from FBI headquarters to request a search warrant from a judge. Had they been granted a warrant before 9/11, they would have found a treasure trove of evidence. A notebook belonging to Moussaoui contained the phone number of Ramzi Bin al-Shibh, the former roommate of Mohammed Atta in Hamburg. Just two weeks before the arrest, Bin al-Shibh had wired money to Moussaoui and twice in the previous year he had wired money to yet another hijacker, Marwan al-Shehhi, in Florida. Agents also would have found a letter from bin Laden operative Yazid Sufaat, whose Kuala Lumpur apartment had been the venue for the January 2000 al-Qaeda meeting attended by al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar.

But the Minneapolis agents never got their search warrant. "Key FBI [headquarters] personnel," according to Rowley, "continued to, almost inexplicably, throw up roadblocks and undermine Minneapolis' by-now desperate efforts to obtain a FISA search warrant, long after the French intelligence service provided its information and probable cause became clear."

One FBI supervisor in Washington, Rowley says, "seemed to have been consistently, almost deliberately thwarting the Minneapolis FBI agents' efforts." He and other officials "brought

up almost ridiculous questions in their apparent efforts to undermine the probable cause." And at one point the official "deliberately further undercut" the search warrant effort by omitting key intelligence information about Moussaoui from a warrant request while "making several changes in the wording of the information"—all of which made it unlikely that the warrant would be approved. One Minneapolis agent described Washington's actions as "setting this up for failure."

To obtain a warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, the FBI must show, according to former Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder, that a suspect is "a member of or connected to a terrorist organization, that there was reason to believe that he was actively engaged in the aims of that terrorist organization." In off-the-record interviews with reporters, FBI officials in Washington denied that the information from France linked Moussaoui to bin Laden. They claim the data connected Moussaoui only with Islamic rebels in Chechnya, who don't figure on the official U.S. list of "terrorist" groups.

But in a pathbreaking investigative report, CBS reporter Scott Pelley traveled to Paris, where he spoke with "a number of sources inside French intelligence" who insisted that France "had reason to connect Moussaoui to the organization of Osama bin Laden." French agents had monitored Moussaoui's trips to Afghanistan and Pakistan; they believed he met with Abu Jaffa, a top aide to Osama bin Laden; and Moussaoui's name had been placed on a French terrorist watch list. In the words of top French terrorism judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere, "we gave [the FBI] everything we had."

According to the *Washington Post's* Bob Woodward, on the morning of 9/11, as aides rushed over to George Tenet's table at the St. Regis Hotel restaurant to tell him the news of the World Trade Center strike, the CIA director was overheard to say: "I wonder if it has anything to do with this guy taking pilot training."

Why Did We 'Back Off' Investigating the Saudis?

"Almost everyone's first question was 'Why? Why would an FBI agent(s) deliberately sabotage a case?'" Rowley wrote in a footnote to her memo. "Jokes were actually made," she added in an eye-catching aside, "that that the key FBIHQ personnel had to be spies or moles, like Robert Hanssen, who were actually working for Osama bin Laden to have so undercut Minneapolis' effort."

Rowley assumed that careerism, timidity, and bureaucratic inertia at FBI headquarters had simply gotten the better of crime-fighting instincts. So far, that has also been the gist of most of the speculation in the press.

But some have alleged that other factors were at work. Several cases from recent years have come to light in which FBI agents complained of being held back by superiors from investigating

"He brought with him, according to his New York lawyer, Michael J. Wildes, some fourteen thousand internal government documents" including "evidence that the Saudis had given financial and technical support to Hamas, the extremist Islamic group whose target is Israel."

Wildes held a meeting at his office with two F.B.I. agents and an Assistant United States Attorney. "We gave them a sampling of the documents and put them on the table," Wildes told Hersh. "But the agents refused to accept them." In an interview on BBC's *Newsnight*, Wildes said that the FBI agents wanted to accept the documents, but had been forbidden from doing so by higher-ups.

The BBC's Greg Palast said that a "high-placed member of a U.S. intelligence agency" told him that "while there's always been constraints on investigating Saudis, under George Bush it's gotten much worse. After the elections, the agencies were told to 'back off' investigating the Bin Ladens and Saudi royals, and that angered agents." The official added that "since September 11th the policy has been reversed."

On orders of the Bush administration, a 28-page section dealing with suspected Saudi ties to the 9/11 plot was blacked out of

*Several cases from recent years have come to light in which
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America's closest Arab ally: Saudi Arabia.*

Islamic extremist groups. In each instance, it was alleged that high-ranking officials acted out of concern that these inquiries could lead back to America's closest Arab ally: Saudi Arabia.

"All the answers, everything needed to dismantle Osama bin Laden's organization can be found in Saudi Arabia," John O'Neill, the FBI's former top bin Laden investigator, said shortly before his death in the World Trade Center. O'Neill explicitly referred to interference from US policymakers concerned about U.S.-Saudi relations. He "complained that the F.B.I. was not free to act in international terror investigations because the State Department kept interfering," according to a *New York Times* account of O' Neill's interview with French journalist Jean-Charles Brisard shortly before his death. O'Neill "explains the failure in one word: oil."

Last year, the *Washington Times* reported that in the mid-'90s, the Clinton administration had "shut down" an investigation of Islamic charities operating in the United States, "concerned that a public probe would expose Saudi Arabia's suspected ties to a global money-laundering operation." Citing law enforcement authorities and others, the *Times* reported that "the State Department pressed federal officials to pull agents off the previously undisclosed probe after the charities were targeted in the diversion of cash to groups that fund terrorism."


In October 2001, in *The New Yorker*, Seymour Hersh reported on the 1994 defection of a Saudi diplomat in the United States.

the declassified version of the congressional report. Bush claimed that declassifying the information "would reveal sources and methods" and "help the enemy." But Sen. Bob Graham, ranking Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, decried the redactions. "In my judgment there is compelling evidence that a foreign government provided direct support through officials and agents of that government to some of the September 11 hijackers," Graham said. Sen. Chuck Schumer went further: "There seems to be a systematic strategy of coddling and cover-up when it comes to the Saudis."

Of course, it may well turn out that all such suspicions about the government's motives are misplaced. Many of the facts about the mishandling of the 9/11 case are perfectly consistent with old-fashioned bungling and incompetence—albeit incredible bungling and staggering incompetence. Somehow it ought to be possible to steer a middle course between wild speculation and cynical whitewash. At both extremes, credulity is a danger. If one thing is certain history keeps surprising us with how venal our national security state can be.

What's needed now is more evidence. That blue-ribbon panel has its work cut out for it. ■

Seth Ackerman is a contributing writer to *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)* and lives in Brooklyn, New York. Research assistance was provided by In These Times intern **Daniel Morris**.



War on the Bill of Rights

By Nat Hentoff

The erosion of sections of the Bill of Rights quickened when the president signed the USA PATRIOT Act on October 26, 2001. With Attorney General John Ashcroft insisting on the crucial need for speed, the House passed the 342-page document by a vote of 356 to 56, although few had the chance to read it. Several members later said that parts of the new law seemed unconstitutional, but in view of the coming elections, they did not want to be attacked as “unpatriotic” by their opponents. In the Senate, only one senator, Wisconsin’s Russ Feingold, voted against the PATRIOT Act.

In the House, dissenter David Obey of Wisconsin said bitterly, “Why should we care? It’s only the Constitution.”

The Act has radically extended government electronic surveillance—on and off the Internet—with often reduced judicial review. For example, FBI agents can enter a home or office with a court order—while the occupants are not there—and insert the “Magic Lantern” (also known as the keystroke logger) into a computer.

It records every stroke, including messages not ever sent from the computer. On returning covertly, the agents can download everything that has been recorded. Notice of their entry can be delayed for 90 days or longer.

Under the PATRIOT Act, with a warrant from the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, the FBI is empowered to go to libraries and bookstores to secure the lists of books borrowed or bought by persons under only tenuous suspicion of links to terrorism. A much lower standard than the Fourth Amendment's "probable cause" is permitted for these inquiries. And with a gag rule unprecedented in American history, both the librarian and the bookstore owner are prohibited from informing anyone, including the press, that these searches have taken place.

Among the extraordinary unilateral incursions in the Bill of Rights taken by John Ashcroft: Government agents can now listen in on conversations between lawyers and their clients in federal prisons without a prior court order.

And it goes on. The December 20, 2002, *New York Times* reported, "The Bush administration is planning to propose requiring Internet service providers to help build a centralized system to enable broad monitoring of the Internet and, potentially, surveillance of its users through the Internet."

Brandon Koerner, a fellow at the New America Foundation, has pointed out in *The Village Voice* that the bill that Congress passed so hastily—and that is now part of the law—"lowers the legal standards necessary for the FBI to deploy its infamous Carnivore surveillance system." Without showing—as the Fourth Amendment requires—probable cause that a crime has been committed or is about to be committed, the government invades your privacy through Carnivore.

The fearful name "Carnivore" disturbed some folks, and so it has been renamed DCS1000. Carnivore, Koerner notes, is "a computer that the Feds attach to an Internet service provider. Once in place, it scans e-mail traffic for 'suspicious' subjects which, in the current climate, could be something as innocent as a message with the word 'Allah' in the header." Or maybe: "SAVE THE FOURTH AMENDMENT FROM TYRANTS!" Carnivore also records other electronic communications.

Ashcroft's Detention Camps

And there is the PATRIOT Act's designation of two American citizens, so far, as "enemy combatants," held in military brigades in this country, without charges and without access to lawyers, and unable to appear personally in court hearings. They are being held indefinitely for interrogation about their possible knowledge of or links to terrorism.

In the case of Yaser Hamdi, taken into custody in Afghanistan and now in a Virginia navy brig, Federal District Judge Robert Doumar, a Reagan appointee, has asked the Justice Department lawyer, "So the Constitution doesn't apply to Mr. Hamdi?" This treatment of American citizens, Judge Doumar has said, "appears to be the first in American jurisprudence."

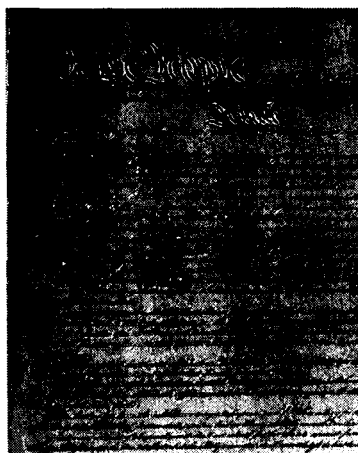
Jonathan Turley, a professor of constitutional and public-interest law at George Washington University, wrote in a column in the August 12, 2002, *Los Angeles Times*: "Attorney General John Ashcroft's announced desire for camps for U.S. citizens he deems

to be 'enemy combatants' has moved him from merely being a political embarrassment to being a constitutional menace." Actually, ever since Ashcroft pushed the PATRIOT Act through a supine Congress, he has subverted more elements of the Bill of Rights than any attorney general in American history.

Turley reports that Justice Department aides to General Ashcroft "have indicated that a 'high-level committee' will recommend which citizens are to be stripped of their constitutional rights and sent to Ashcroft's new camps. ... Of course Ashcroft is not considering camps on the order of the internment camps used to incarcerate Japanese-American citizens in World War II. But he can be credited only with thinking smaller; we have learned from painful experience that unchecked authority, once tasted, easily becomes insatiable."

Turley insists that "the proposed camp plan should trigger immediate congressional hearings and reconsideration of Ashcroft's fitness for important office. Whereas al-Qaeda is a threat to the lives of our citizens, Ashcroft has become a clear and present threat to our liberties." There has, as yet, been no congressional call for such hearings.

On August 8, 2002, the *Wall Street Journal*, which much admires Ashcroft on its editorial pages, reported that "the Goose Creek, South Carolina, facility that houses [Jose] Padilla—mostly empty since it was designated in January to hold foreigners captured in the U.S. and facing military tribunals—now has a special wing that could be used to



**'Why should we care?
It's only the Constitution.'**
Rep. David Obey (D-Wisc.)

jail about twenty U.S. citizens if the government were to deem them enemy combatants, a senior administration official said." The Justice Department has told Turley that it has not denied this story. And space can be found in military installations for more "enemy combatants."

But once the camps are operating, can Ashcroft be restrained from detaining—not in these special camps, but in regular lock-ups—any American investigated under suspicion of domestic terrorism under the new, elastic FBI guidelines for criminal investigations? From page three of these Ashcroft terrorism FBI guidelines, it's worth noting again that "The nature of the conduct engaged in by a [terrorist] enterprise will justify an inference that the standard [for opening a criminal justice investigation] is satisfied, even if there are no known statements by participants that advocate or indicate planning for violence or other prohibited acts." That conduct can be simply "intimidating" the government, according to the PATRIOT Act.

Vanishing Liberties

On March 18, 2003, The Associated Press reported that at John Carroll University, in a Cleveland suburb, Justice Antonin Scalia said, "Most of the rights you enjoy go way beyond what the Constitution requires" because "the Constitution just sets minimums." Accordingly, in wartime, Scalia emphasized, "the protections will be ratcheted down to the constitutional minimum."

Most of the radical revisions of the Constitution that I and others have been writing about will ultimately be ruled on by the Supreme Court. Scalia indicates he will come down on the side of Bush and Ashcroft. A few days after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said that as a result, we are "likely to experience more restrictions on our personal freedom than has ever been the case in our country."

In his book *All the Laws But One: Civil Liberties in Wartime* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), William Rehnquist, the chief justice of the United States, who will be presiding over the constitutionality of the Bush-Ashcroft assaults on the Constitution, wrote, "In time of war, presidents may act in ways that push their legal authority to its outer limits, if not beyond."

Reacting to Rehnquist's deference to the executive branch in previous wars, Adam Cohen, legal affairs writer for the *New York Times*, wrote: "The people whose liberties are taken away are virtually invisible" in the pages of Rehnquist's book.

Meanwhile, in an invaluable new report by the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, *Imbalance of Powers: How Changes to U.S. Law and Policy Since 9/11 Erode Human Rights and Civil Liberties* (March 2003), a section begins: "A mantle of secrecy continues to envelop the executive branch, largely with the acquiescence of Congress and the courts. [This] makes effective oversight impossible, upsetting the constitutional system of checks and balances."

So where is the oversight going to come from? If at all, first from the people pressuring Congress—provided enough of us know what is happening to our rights and liberties. And that requires, as James Madison said, a vigorous press, because the press has been "the beneficent source to which the United States owes much of the light which conducted [us] to the ranks of a free and independent nation."

But the media, with few exceptions, are failing to report consistently, and in depth, precisely how Bush and Ashcroft are undermining our fundamental individual liberties.

For example, the Justice Department had kept secret from Congress the Domestic Security Enhancement Act, the proposed sequel to the PATRIOT Act. A week before an anonymous member of Ashcroft's staff leaked PATRIOT Act II, a representative of the Justice Department even lied to the Senate Judiciary Committee about its very existence.

A few sections in that chilling draft were briefly covered in some of the media. But these invasions of the Constitution were only a one or two-day story in nearly all of the media.

How many Americans know that if the bill is passed (and Bush certainly won't veto it), they can be stripped of their citizenship if charged with giving "material support" to a group designated by the government as "terrorist"? Sending a check for the outfit's lawful activities—without knowing why it landed on Ashcroft's list—could make you a person without a country and put you behind bars here indefinitely.

Justice Denied at its Source

Three days before the first anniversary of September 11, the *Daily Journal Gazette* of Fort Wayne, Indiana, published an indictment of Ashcroft and the Bush administration in an editorial, "Attacks on Liberty." It was the paper's first full-page editorial in nearly 20 years. The *Journal Gazette* charged:

In the name of national security, President Bush, Attorney General John Ashcroft, and even Congress have pulled strand after strand out of the constitutional fabric that distinguishes the United States from other nations. ...

Actions taken over the past year are eerily reminiscent of tyranny portrayed in the most nightmarish works of fiction. The power to demand reading lists from libraries could have been drawn from the pages of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. ... The sudden suspension of due process for immigrants rounded up into jails is familiar to readers of Sinclair Lewis' *It Can't Happen Here*.

Among the quotations from distinguished Americans in the editorial was one of my favorites—Louis Brandeis' "The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding."

The changes in the air are not only far from slight, but they are ominous in view of what another current Supreme Court jus-

'The Constitution needs renewal and understanding each generation, or else it's not going to last.'

Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy

tice, Anthony Kennedy, has warned: "The Constitution needs renewal and understanding each generation, or else it's not going to last."

But the Constitution cannot be continually renewed unless enough Americans understand its crucial guarantees of personal liberties against an executive branch that eagerly and righteously keeps assuming powers that the Constitution mandates be shared with Congress and the judiciary.

During a radio interview in Alaska, on February 11, 2003, Rep. Don Young, a plainspoken conservative Republican, said to a caller from Hooper Bay, Alaska, "The events of September 11, as horrendous and horrible as they were, have had an even more horrendous effect—in my opinion and I think in the opinion of a lot of Americans—on our rights, through such of the legislation that has been passed as the PATRIOT Act. The worst act we ever passed."

"Did you vote for it?" the caller asked.

"Everybody voted for it," Don Young said, "but it was stupid. It was what you call 'emotional voting.' We didn't follow it through, we didn't study it. I think you're going to see—what I call—improvements, changes. ... I say this very strongly. American citizens have constitutional rights, and we have to follow them."

On the National Day of Prayer, May 1, 2003, Attorney General John Ashcroft declared in Washington: "It is faith and prayer that are the sources of this nation's strength."

In view of Ashcroft's systematic invasions of our liberties, it is understandable that he missed the quintessential source of this nation's strength—the Bill of Rights—as Don Young of Alaska and increasing millions of Americans know, and are insistent on protecting. ■

Nat Hentoff is a columnist for *The Village Voice* and the *Washington Times*. This essay was adapted from *The War on the Bill of Rights* and the *Gathering Resistance* (2003 Seven Stories Press).

The WTO's Broken Promise

By David Moberg

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RADE NEGOTIATORS PROMISED THAT "development" of the world's poorer nations would be at the top of their agenda during negotiations over new trade rules that the World Trade Organization members launched two years ago.

They planned to focus on agriculture, since the vast majority of people in poor countries still work the land as small landowning peasants or as rural laborers. But as both governments and concerned citizen groups prepared for the September 10 WTO meeting in Cancun, Mexico, it seemed more likely that any new agreement would further enhance multinational corporations' control over global agriculture and not the economies of developing countries or, least of all, the well-being of the world's poorest people.

For roughly five decades, agriculture was excluded from negotiations for reduced tariffs and trade barriers, largely because the United States wanted to protect its domestic agriculture programs. But with the establishment of the WTO in 1995, agriculture was put on the table.

At the last WTO meeting in Doha, Qatar, trade ministers agreed to increase agricultural producers' access to markets (especially for poor countries selling to richer countries) and to decrease domestic financial support for agriculture. In theory, this was supposed to lead to freer, more "liberalized" trade in agricultural products.

Most countries, however, recognize that agriculture, which is wildly subject to the vagaries of weather, is not like other industries. Having secure food supplies, for example, is more important than having a steady supply of automobiles or portable disc players. Agricultural practices also have a big impact on natural environments and the social fabric of society, even in societies where farm populations have shrunk. And many small, poor countries are dependent on one or a few agricultural products for their export earnings, which was one of many reasons the WTO talked about establishing distinct rules to help developing nations.

In the model of free trade comparative advantage, it may make sense for Portugal to make wine and for England to produce wool, but most agricultural trade decisions involve far more complex social, economic, and environmental calculations. Consequently, there are a large number of blocs of countries with quite different interests.



One group of major exporting countries (the Cairns group) includes both developed and developing nations that want to minimize trade barriers. But some of those same countries also want special protections for their domestic ag industries. Both the European Union and the United States promote the ideology of free trade, but both also want to keep their farm subsidy programs in place. For that, poor countries attack them as hypocrites who want to pry open markets and "dump" their products at destructively low prices and at the same time keep their own markets closed to Third World products.

Despite the complex patterns of barriers and subsidies, agricultural trade has opened up in many countries, not only through NAFTA, the WTO, and other trade agreements but also through International Monetary Fund pressure on cash-strapped countries. So far the results have been encouraging only for the global agribusiness companies that control and profit from the trade in goods and often depressed world commodity prices.

Researchers at Food First and the Institute for Food and Development Policy studied the effects of more liberalized agricultural trade policies in Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa, and the United States. They found that the freer trade "has cost the poor jobs and income, has increased rural poverty and inequality, and has wiped out small farms and communities." Even when increased agricultural trade brings more revenue to some countries, it is the very big farmers and multinational corporations that gain the most.

As agriculture is restructured to become more concentrated, more industrial and more environmentally harmful, small farmers and peasants suffer. Consequently, the shift to agricultural exports pushes farmers producing food for domestic consumption out of business. The export agricultural producers profit from the labor of poorly paid, landless workers, which makes a bad social situation worse and leads to greater economic inequality. For poor people, underdevelopment is preferable to this free-trade engineered development.

Agricultural policies in the United States and Europe cause trouble for those developing countries that do open their markets by encouraging dumping, that is, selling goods below the cost of production. Dumping may be related to the existence of domestic subsidy programs, but it isn't the same thing. It would be possible to guarantee that U.S. farmers are paid at least the full cost of production, to limit crop production, and to prevent crops from being exported at a below market price. Doing this would reduce the volume of U.S. exports and allow farmers in the United States and in most other countries to come out ahead financially.

Instead, farmers in the U.S. often earn far less than it costs to produce their crops, receive subsidies that don't make up the difference, and then have their crops sold in the grain markets at unfairly low prices around the world, thereby depressing incomes for farmers elsewhere. IATP calculated that in 2001 it cost U.S. farmers on average \$6.24 to produce a bushel of wheat, but big U.S. exporters like Cargill were able to sell the wheat on the world market for \$3.50, or 44 percent below the cost of production.

Government support payments compensate for only a small part of that shortfall for most farmers. And those payments were concentrated among the largest and richest farmers, leaving smaller-scale farmers—those that don't go bankrupt—to rely on income from jobs off the farm to make up for their losses.

Cargill—and the handful of other companies that dominate the global grain trade—profit from selling this cheap grain, and processors, like Archer Daniels Midland, or end users, like food giants from Coca-Cola to Tyson's, benefit from these low-cost agricultural products. But such dumping simply leads to low prices and fewer markets for the products of farmers and peasants elsewhere in the world—like Mexican peasants flooded with cheap U.S. corn under NAFTA.

European milk is dumped in central America, destroying its indigenous dairy industry, and the dark meat that is less prized in European and American chicken markets is dumped in

Senegal or other countries, wiping out flourishing domestic poultry industries. The milk is subsidized, but the chicken isn't. Both cases of dumping have the same deleterious effects.

In the eyes of some free trade theorists, the consuming countries should be delighted at getting cheap food at less than the cost to produce it. Some countries can benefit, especially if they do not have a big farming economy (like Saudi Arabia). But by destroying the still-large agricultural sectors in most other countries, low price imports depress domestic agricultural markets around the world—markets that are needed for development. Rarely are the economies of those countries adequate to absorb the flood of displaced peasants even if hundreds of new sweatshops are opened. Countries that depend on their limited supply of hard foreign currency to buy other crucial goods, from machinery to medicines, are thereby forced to spend it on food. Further, consumers don't always benefit from depressed farm prices. Over the past 15 years in the United States, for example, the spread between farm and retail prices for a market basket of goods has increased sharply. Even in Mexico, since agri-

culture was liberalized, the price of tortillas has skyrocketed while corn prices have fallen.

If all dumping were halted, developing country economies would be strengthened, as people in the rural sector would have more income to buy goods, educate children, and improve their livelihoods. And the transition of the workforce out of agriculture could be managed more humanely.

As the Center for Economic and Policy Research co-directors Dean Baker and Mark Weisbrot note, simply removing trade barriers will do little to develop the poor countries. The World Bank calculated that low and middle income countries would only gain about six-tenths of one percent in their gross domestic product if all rich country trade barriers—for both industrial and agricultural goods—were phased out by 2015. It is important to protect these countries from unwanted dumping and to open access to rich markets, particularly for products that are not environmentally destructive or produced with heavily exploited workers. Free trade, however, will not on its own yield the development promised at Doha.

The forces pushing the agricultural trade talks are not poor farmers, despite the fact that many developing countries were taking a more independent, aggressive stand heading into the meeting at Cancun. The global agribusiness corporations that profit at the expense of farmers in both the developed and developing world have set the agenda, while peddling panaceas—like genetically modified crops—for agricultural crises that are partly caused by the corporate-dominated market. This concentration of corporate power is as much a distortion of markets as are agricultural subsidies.

Not surprisingly, however, no proposals at the Cancun meeting will address the corporate power of global agribusiness and how it shapes the global markets in farming and food. ■

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A Woman of Influence

By Cedric Kyesi Johnson

For many within the American civil rights movement, Ella Josephine Baker was a consummate organizer, a politically sophisticated intellectual, a patient teacher, faithful comrade, and in many respects a miracle worker. Like Fannie Lou Hamer, Myles Horton, Bayard

Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision

By Barbara Ransby

The University of North Carolina Press
470 pages, \$34.95

Rustin, Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, Esau Jenkins, Septima Clark and countless other unsung heroes and heroines, Baker was among the prime architects of the civil rights movement, often standing just beyond the media-refracted images of mass marches, charismatic preachers and violent police reprisals. Since her death in 1986, interest in Baker's life and legacy has grown. The handful of leadership programs and grassroots organizations that bear her name, such as the Children's Defense Fund's Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute and the Bay Area's Ella Baker Center for Human Rights testify to her continuing resonance.

Barbara Ransby's *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* represents a major contribution to American historiography. She offers an authoritative, meticulously researched, intimate portrait of Baker's captivating life. As executive director for the Public Square, a Chicago-area organization dedicated to open political debate and participatory democracy, Ransby writes as a kindred spirit. The result is a graceful, deeply personal work with even deeper political value for the contemporary American left.

Given that Baker's political career spanned some of the most tumultuous

decades of the 20th century, Ransby's biography is in many ways a history of 20th-century progressive and radical left politics, and she writes about Baker with an eye on contemporary social struggles. For Ransby, "There are vital political and historical lessons to be gleaned by looking back in time through the lens of Ella Baker's life."

Until now the only book-length treatment of the late activist was Joanne Grant's pioneering 1999 biography, *Ella Baker: Freedom Bound*. (Grant also produced the acclaimed PBS documentary, *Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker*.) Ransby's work offers a more extensive look. She

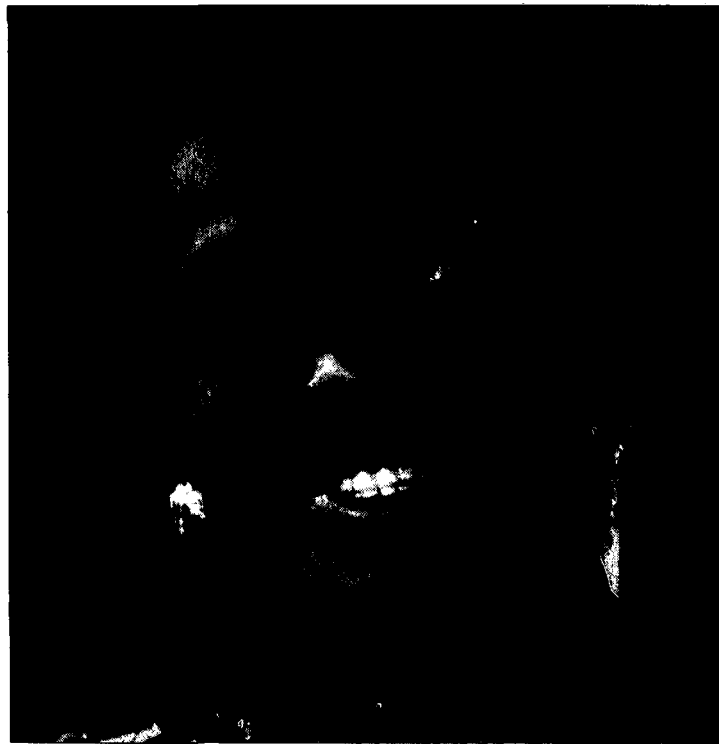
aggressive attempt to contextualize Baker's activism within wider social struggles and to analyze her distinctive political philosophy.

The task of assessing Baker's political outlook is made difficult by her marathon commitment to organizing—more so than theorizing. Although Baker was revered by friends and foes alike for her rhetorical gifts and sharp mind, unlike many of the most well known African American leaders, she did not leave a sizable paper trail of ideas. Instead, as Ransby points out, "Baker's theory of social change and political organizing was inscribed in her practice." Much of the value of Ransby's work lies in her attempts to bring Baker's politics into sharper focus.

Over her nearly 60 years of activism, Baker developed a non-sectarian, radical democratic politics. Although she chose to work inside major civil rights organizations for much of her activist career rather than joining one of the radical left political parties, Baker was, as Ransby notes, "a harsh critic of capitalism." And while her socialist convictions were rarely made explicit, Baker is quoted as saying, "The only society that can serve the needs of large masses of poor people is a socialist society."

Drawing on the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, Ransby characterizes Baker as an "organic intellectual" because "her primary base of knowledge came from grassroots communities and from lived experience, not from formal study. She was a partisan intellectual, never feigning a bloodless objectivity, but

always insisting that ideas should be employed in the service of oppressed people and toward the goal of justice." But Ransby may overreach in her attempts to cast Baker in such terms. For Baker might be seen as an "organic intellectual" only if the concept is understood in a racial sense—a move that obscures the class implications of the term.



DANNY LYON/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Civil rights pioneer Ella Baker: Do strong people need strong leaders?

dives deeper into the lesser-known facts of Baker's personal life, particularly her "most unconventional" marriage to T.J. Roberts, her often turbulent associations with mainstream civil rights leaders like Walter White and Martin Luther King Jr., and her complicated relationship with McCarthyite anti-communism. Most importantly, Ransby makes a more

Baker was born in Norfolk, Virginia in 1903, a generation removed from slavery and partially insulated from the hardships of Jim Crow. Her childhood was spent primarily in her mother Anna Ross Baker's hometown of Littleton, North Carolina. The Ross-Baker clan was comprised of literate landowners who were proud of their hard-fought self-sufficiency. This reality alone distinguished Baker's formative beginnings from that of many Southern blacks whose claims to citizenship were circumscribed by debt peonage and segregation. As Ransby writes, Baker was "nurtured, educated and challenged by a community of strong, hard-working, deeply religious people—most of them women—who celebrated their accomplishments and recognized their class advantage, but who also pledged themselves to serve and uplift those less fortunate." It was in this milieu of republican virtue, race uplift, and Christian temperance that Baker evolved.

Baker's background and origins were not unlike that of other race leaders during the first half of the 20th century. Her mother's involvement with the black Baptist missionary movement, Baker's formal education at Shaw Academy and Shaw University, and her initial aspirations to become a missionary conform to broader patterns of black elite ideology and social mobility in the segregated South. These biographical details do not diminish Baker's contribution, but rather they make her political path all the more remarkable and exemplary. Although a relatively comfortable life as a missionary or teacher was available to her, she embraced radical activism and all of the inherent dangers and sacrifices it entailed.

Likewise, as Ransby details, Baker defied the norms of middle-class female respectability through her outspokenness, nomadic lifestyle, and refusal to be bound by marital domesticity. In many respects, Baker falls closer to Gramsci's discussion of "traditional" intellectuals, who may fulfill either a revolutionary or conservative function. Although Baker's formative background prepared her for a life among the fledgling black elite, she chose another path.

But Ransby is nonetheless correct to draw Baker and Gramsci into conversation. Both intellectuals struggled through historical moments when the emancipatory horizons of left vanguard parties, trade

unionism and state socialism were in crisis. Gramsci anticipated the kind of homegrown, working-class leaders capable of contesting capitalist hegemony, while Baker hastened the transition to more democratic organizational forms through her practice. As Ransby illustrates

Baker challenged the centralization of authority under spokespersons—even radical ones.

throughout, Baker's radicalism challenged the centralization of authority under spokespersons—even ostensibly radical ones. In her tireless efforts to disseminate political knowledge and develop the technical skills and local organizational capacity of the poor, students and working people, she encouraged the devolution of expertise, the generalization of intellectual activity and the widening of genuine democratic participation. Baker actively cultivated "organic" intellectualism.

The vibrant, cosmopolitan environment of Depression-era Harlem facilitated Baker's radicalization. Ransby observes that after Baker resettled in New York City, "She combined the black Baptist missionary values of charity, humility and service with the economic theories of Marxists and socialists of various stripes who advocated a redistribution of society's wealth and a transfer of power from capitalist elites to the poor and working classes."

In Harlem, Baker befriended George Schuyler, a black journalist, anarchist, and staunch opponent of Soviet communism (and later a rabid arch-conservative). In 1931, Schuyler formed the Young Negroes Cooperative League (YNCL), which Baker joined a year later. The YNCL consisted of a loose, nationwide network of local cooperatives and buying clubs. As Ransby points out, the founding statement of the YNCL "reflected many of the principles of grass-roots democracy and group-centered leadership that Ella Baker advocated for the rest of her political life."

The group was pioneering in its push for equal participation of women and youth. Baker further honed her activist skills and pedagogy while working as a literacy

teacher with the Works Progress Administration's Worker Education Project. She subverted her role as an intellectual by eschewing authority and personal aggrandizement to facilitate greater autonomy and self-determination among working people.

Baker's democratic style ultimately grated the egocentric, unilateral leadership styles of civil rights bureaucrats, such as the NAACP's Walter White and Lillie Jackson. She challenged the prevailing sense that the national office, rather than the quotidian concerns of constituencies, should guide the struggle for full citizenship rights. From her tenure as field secretary and later director of branches for the NAACP during the 1940s through her role as political godmother to young activists in the Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Baker insisted that democratic struggles be guided by an internally democratic process of open debate, deliberation and equal participation for all regardless of gender, income, education or status.

Along with Bayard Rustin and Stanley Levison, Baker co-founded In Friendship, an organization to develop support in the North for the Montgomery bus boycott and other desegregation campaigns. Her opportunity to become more intimately involved in the southern civil rights struggle came in 1957 when she was invited to organize the Atlanta headquarters of the newly formed Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). As Ransby points out, Martin Luther King Jr. and other ministers within SCLC were reluctant to make a firm commitment to Baker because they desired a male preacher for the post. They were persuaded to bring her on board at the urging of Levison and Rustin, who swore by Baker's incredible organizing talents.

Sadly, some of Baker's later pupils would eventually break from her most important lessons of radical democratic politics. First, some black power radicals veered toward the very vanguardism and personality-centered leadership styles that Baker and SNCC activists had battled earlier within the civil rights mainstream. Later, with the emergence of black political incorporation and new career opportunities for upwardly mobile blacks, many who came of age during the social upheavals of the '50s and '60s

embraced insider politics and moderation as well-deserved “gains of the ’60s.”

Yet, despite the conservative sea change in American politics that transpired during Baker’s golden years, many of her students—like Bob Moses, Connie Curry, Charlie Cobb, Bernice Johnson Reagon and Gwendolyn Patton—continued to promote the vision of radical democracy she taught and practiced. Baker’s ability to

work through ideological battles, personality conflicts, and partisan rivalries for the sake of building progressive politics is a model of activist practice worthy of emulation. Ransby’s work insures that the political spirit of Ella Baker will live on. ■

Cedric Kwesi Johnson is a professor of political science at Hobart and William Smith Colleges.

Gleaming the Rubes

By James Parker

I was duped into seeing *Grind*. Duped! I heard that it featured Bam Margera, pro skater and one of the *Jackass* crew, and went along in hopes of some *Jackass*-style entertainment: panting idiotism at play, wild skaters rising and horribly laughing like sparks of anarchy. What I got was

Grind

Directed by Casey La Scala

a low-end road-trip buddy movie gross-out teen romance comedy mounted incompetently on a slow-moving skateboard, with a first-time director and virgin lead actors—an authentic cinematic waste product. My viewing of *Grind*—or *Rind*, as the marquee outside my local cineplex has it—was duly attended by various symptoms of deadness and abandonment (two other people in the audience; overhead lights left on, prison-like; here and there a broken seat lumpily shrouded in black plastic).

Nonetheless I enjoyed myself. There are few things as true to their own nature as the authentic waste product, and *Grind* smells richly and sincerely of failure. This flick will make no money: It is its destiny to lose money. By the simplest laws, by biological fiat, it must be so: From time to time there must be a cleaning-out. The knackered plotlines, the dead formulae, the impotent jokes—all things expired, exhausted, rejected and un-nutritive—must meet and make a compact in the darkness, away from the light of the mind, and be got rid of.

Honey-blond Eric (Mike Vogel) wants to be a pro skater. His ambition is chaste—he wakes up every morning under an action-shot of Tony Alva (a real skater) and dreams of meeting the great

Jimmy Wilson (not a real skater)—he has consecrated himself to his sport. He wants to get sponsored and have skateboards named after him and leave his job at Chili ’n’ Such. He feels he has the talent (we have to take his word for this)—all he needs is the exposure. So he makes difficult overtures to passing pros, limply offering them a videotape, his personal showreel. One of these pros is—yes!—Bam Margera. We remember Bam from the *Jackass* series and movie as a watery-eyed simpleton thrashing his meager body with loony skate-stunts or attacking his



Introducing Mike Vogel, skating weenie.

father in the night with a toilet plunger—avid, Oedipal, unsettling.

But in *Grind*, in this low company, he is changed, changed utterly; he has Byronic glamour and self-possession; his shirts are mauve and he flourishes long, contemptuous fingers at the “haggard-ass chicks” who offend him. Lamprey-pale under clotted black locks, he parts the nodding

bouncers—“He’s with me,” says Bam. But Bam is finally no help, so Eric must take matters into his own hands. He must go on the road with his three skate-buddies as the unsponsored Super Duper skating team, and do bootleg sessions at professional events in the hope of being spotted. His buddies are purely typed: a wiry collegiate nerd, a smooth-talking classic-rock lover-boy (a knock-off of the great Wooderson in *Dazed and Confused*), and a terrible bulbous id-figure called Matt (Vince Vieluf), farting and guffawing, whose province is “toilet humor”—he literally stands in a toilet, laughing at himself.

None of this would be too terrible, were it not that *Grind* is so very, very poorly made. The dialogue is not bad. “We’re all sharing one heartbeat like a herd of great elk!” is a nice line, and writer Ralph Sall has a bit of way with the skater’s dopey jargon—“I totally didn’t see you for who you were,” murmurs the hero to his girl. But to look at? Almost every frame sags with unbalance, like a hastily-packed bag of groceries. The editing is straightforwardly, even honorably, atrocious, as if its atrocity were a point of principle: Certain images are so abruptly spliced as to suggest dislocations of a dream sequence. Where am I? What just happened? At a scene in a club there seems to be a problem with the sound—is someone sitting on the speaker?

Granted, a skateboard movie brings with it certain technical considerations. The filming of stand-ins, for instance, of the skaters who perform the tricks your actors cannot, must be a difficult business. At least, director Casey La Scala makes it look difficult. *Grind*’s crucial skateboard antics are revealed to us in bungled glimpses, as La Scala’s stuntmen whizz by with their heads cropped out-of-shot, or in demented silhouette, or with faces averted under stiff, mad wigs. The effect is sinister—they look like flying transvestite burglars.

I might daintily tweezer out a couple of moments that are as we critics like to say “not without merit”: Tom Green’s brief turn as a fried skater-DJ is a deeply-buried jewel of a performance, of the sort that one only finds in waste product, and Bobcat Goldthwait stands winningly at the rim of a motel swimming pool, belly out, wearing tiny shorts, squinting in infantile bafflement and making sexual slap-slap noises with the heels of his hands. *Grind* is to be seen in a mood of passionate cynicism, or not at all. ■

Landmine Rock

By Scott Redding

Music festivals are an essential part of an English summer. People arrive, set up their campsites, lay down their blankets, and quickly visit a nearby tent for beer or tay-berry ice cream. It's ritualized and relaxed, but also an apolitical contrast to 1.2 million people on a February anti-war march through the streets of London. A few musicians may critique the Bush-Blair war on terror and sing about anti-fascism, Mao, and the IRA, but their set finishes after a few songs, and it's back to boy-meets-girl lyrics.

To try to change and channel this unfocused atmosphere, anti-war groups such as the International Solidarity Movement and Oxfam (the U.K.'s largest development charity), are traveling from festival to festival. At Leicester's Summer Sundae in August, the Oxfam table featured a life-sized poster of a bloodstained figure holding an AK-47. A cut-out hole was where the person's head should be. Local Oxfam workers took photos of passers-by to build support for an international treaty (similar to the Ottawa treaty on landmines) on the "end-use" of the world's 500,000 small weapons.

Since a 1997 visit to Cambodia and Vietnam, singer Emmylou Harris has promoted the global campaign against landmines. Landmines maim or kill every 22 minutes, and their victims are 90 percent civilian. The freedom to walk without fear "is a basic right that we take for granted," Harris says. With fellow musician Steve Earle, she has played a series of benefits for the Campaign for a Landmine Free World. Their current tour came to Summer Sundae as the final Sunday evening act on August 10.

Harris is onstage at 7:30 p.m. sharp to begin the concert. She introduces Earle, naming him as her "captain," and their three fellow performers: Joan Baez, Billy Bragg, and Chrissie Hynde. Returning a mock salute, Earle earns his stripes later by ripping through "Devil's Right Hand" and "Ashes to Ashes." Baez covers Earle's "Christmas in Washington," and Bragg reworks his "Waiting for the Great Leap Forward" to include new lyrics on

Emmylou Harris (right) and Steve Earle (below) bring the Campaign for a Landmine Free World to the festival circuit.



Donald Rumsfeld, the NHS (Britain's health service), and smart bombs.

Harris reveals that a person on a solidarity visit to Palestine has been listening to the concert by mobile phone. Earle, in the four-song encore, dedicates "Jerusalem" to "everybody, and I mean everybody, in Palestine tonight."

The key moment in bridging the gap between a garden-variety summer festival and an energizing political event occurs at the halfway point of the concert. Bobby Muller, clad in black, rolls himself in his wheelchair to a microphone at stage-left. Muller is the head of Vietnam War Veterans of America. His group was part of the international campaign against landmines that won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997. The crowd falls silent as Muller explains the inherent, indiscriminately violent nature of landmines. "You set the charge, you hide it, and whomever steps on it becomes the victim," whether it is 30 hours or 30 years later.

Landmines affect the ability of women to gather firewood to sell in marketplaces



and prevent children from playing in fields. Landmines prevent the agricultural use of the land in Angola, where 17 tons of food are flown in each day. In 1997, there were over 100 million mines buried in over 60 countries. Muller emphasizes to the crowd that "nothing has allowed the landmines campaign to go forward like these concerts. These musicians in front of you are ambassadors of justice."

Richard Lloyd, director of the British charity Landmine Action, says that 135 countries, including Britain, have signed and ratified the 1997 Ottawa treaty banning landmines. The United States has not signed. "There is a need in America for the public to keep the pressure up on the present administration," Lloyd says. "More could also be done by the British to persuade, for example, the U.S. to join the treaty."

The outward face of Britain may be *Bend It Like Beckham*, royalty, and standing ovations for Tony Blair in Congress. On the ground, however, public trust in Blair is at an all-time low. Stickers on the London Underground are promoting protests at a weapons export fair in September. Summer Sundae was broadcast by the BBC—would an anti-landmine concert be given a national broadcast in the United States? As Buffalo Springfield once said, something's happening here. The British public could force Blair to increase the landmines pressure on key allies—and prove that he has foreign policies of his own. ■

Scott Redding has also written for the British magazine *Red Pepper*.



Condozilla
 Josh MacPhee
 Spray Paint, 2000
 Chicago, Illinois

WE SHALL NOT

BY CAROL WELLS

A missed paycheck, a health crisis, or an unpaid bill are all that it might take to push a growing number of Americans into life on the streets.

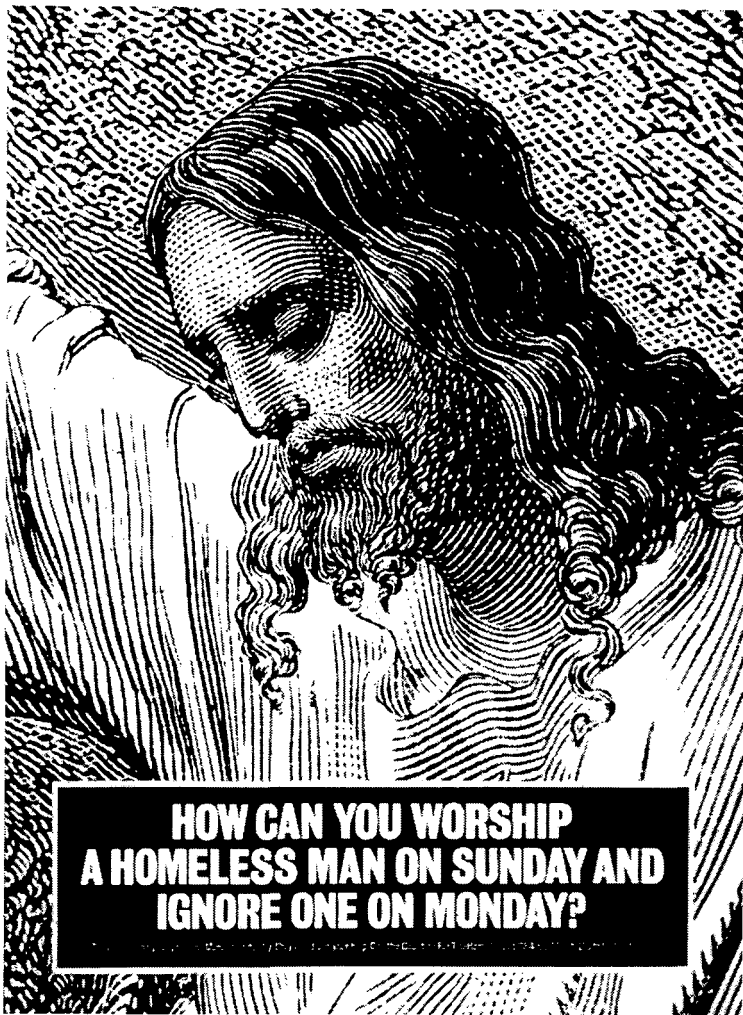
In the United States, homelessness has nearly doubled since the 1970s. As America's income gap widens, renters worry if they can ever buy homes of their own—or keep their rentals through retirement. Homeless people suffer a loss of rights such as voting, which requires an

address. They suffer greater victimization from crime, chronic health problems, and early death.

In the 1930s and early 1940s, the U.S. government produced posters advocating people's housing rights. But as space for affordable housing has become scarcer and more expensive, the terms of the debate have changed: Will policy makers and developers define a neighborhood as a low-income community or as urban blight? A low-income community has rights and an obligation to its residents. In contrast, the label "urban blight" or "slum" implies

that the majority who live there don't care.

The stakes in neighborhood development struggles are growing higher. Whether it is to tear down homes for a freeway, cultural center, business district, sport stadium, university expansion, or luxury housing, one thing remains clear—gentrification destroys existing communities. These posters show people organizing to defend their neighborhoods. They raise conflicting class interests, document the struggle, and are effective tools to educate and organize. And whether the residents win or



**HOW CAN YOU WORSHIP
A HOMELESS MAN ON SUNDAY AND
IGNORE ONE ON MONDAY?**

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**JOIN YOUR LOCAL
TENANTS UNION**

Join Your Local
Tenants Union
Kees
Offset, n.d.
Minneapolis, Minnesota

How Can You Worship a Homeless Man
On Sunday and Ignore One on Monday?
Coalition For The Homeless
Offset, n.d.
New York, New York

**ON DISPLAY IN THE
OFFICES OF
IN THESE TIMES FROM
SEPTEMBER 5 -
OCTOBER 3, 2003.**

BE MOVED

**POSTERS ON
GENTRIFICATION.
HOMELESSNESS.
AND RESISTANCE**

lose, they become empowered in the process of fighting for the stability of their communities—and the posters record their progress.

The lack of affordable housing is not just a U.S. problem. *We Shall Not Be Moved* uses both domestic and international posters to show that homelessness and gentrification are major issues throughout the world—and from the United States to Europe to Australia, posters remain the resisters' tools of choice.

Posters announce demonstrations opposing demolitions, support squatters' rights to move

into abandoned buildings, and organize tenants' unions. They mark victories, defeats, and ongoing confrontations. They are powerful tools to inform, motivate, and organize a community, and to tell the stories to future generations.

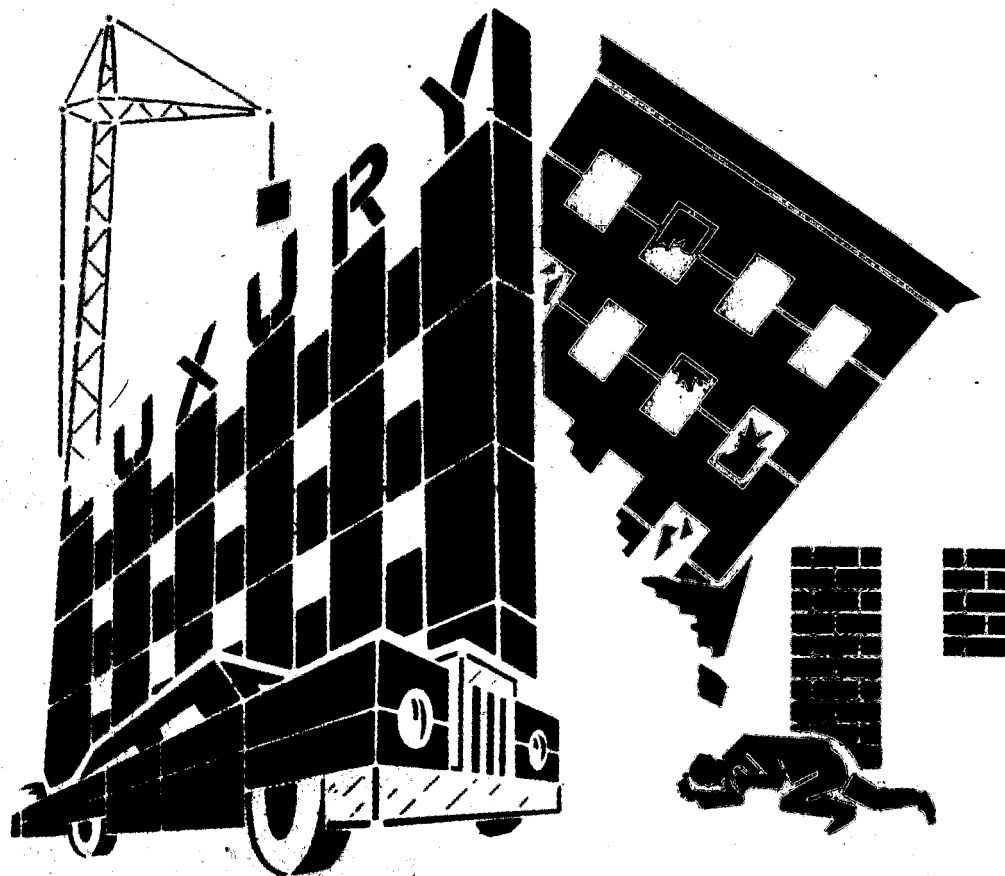
Despite the speed of the Internet, the poster and a phone tree remain effective and affordable organizing tools for neighborhoods targeted for gentrification. E-mail can augment these efforts and involve a larger audience, but the digital divide is still a critical issue in low-income communities, and the poster will not

be replaced in the foreseeable future. As the corporate press rarely describes events from the demonstrators' perspective, posters are also critical historical documents for recording community resistance. They show that victory does not happen overnight—it can take years—but it is possible to fight city hall and the developers and win.

Carol Wells is executive director of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics (www.politicalgraphics.org).

We Shall Not Be Moved: Posters on Gentrification, Homelessness, and Resistance was curated by Ryan Corey, Garland Kirkpatrick, and Carol Wells, from the collection of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles, California.

The exhibition has been made possible in part by grants from the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, the LEF Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and individual donors.



Luxury
Anton Van Dalen
Silkscreen, 1987
New York, New York

CONCRETE CRISIS: A FADED PROJECT, 1987

ANTON VAN DALEN '84



Real Estate
Josh MacPhee
Spray Paint, 2000
Chicago, Illinois



Und der Haifisch der Hat Zähne
[And the Shark Has Teeth]
Klaus Staack
Offset, 1975
Germany



Boutique
Artist unknown
Spray paint, ca. 1983
New York, New York

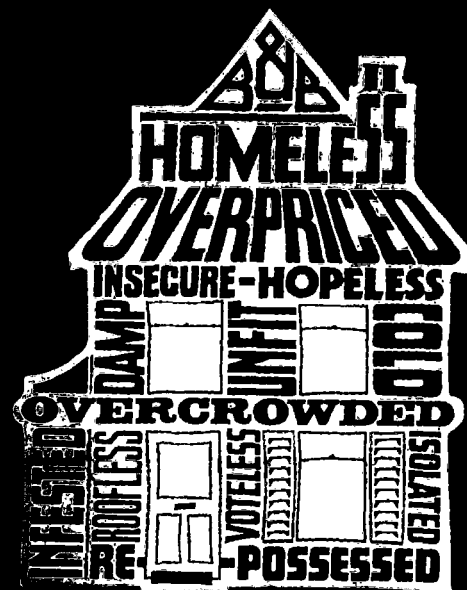
Tenants Organize
Santa Barbara Tenants Union
Silkscreen, ca. 1979
Santa Barbara, California



AFTER A SUCCESSFUL COLONIZATION



THE MOTHER SHIP LANDS



Is this the house
that we've built?

Is This the House that We've Built?
Quaker Social Responsibility and Education
Offset, 1993
England

After a Successful Colonization
Janet Koenig
Offset, 1987
New York, New York

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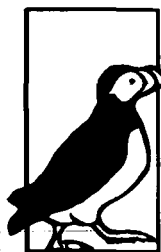
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Continued from back cover

love to kill her, and the threat of this is a constant reality in her life, but for now they know that they could not withstand the popular explosion that would follow such a murder, for she's the symbol of the people's suppressed democratic yearnings. Instead, they held her under house arrest for seven-and-a-half years, and, though she was officially released last year, she is hounded, harassed, monitored, and followed everywhere she goes in an effort to intimidate her and Burma's other democracy activists. They wish she would leave, but she wouldn't even go to Stockholm to accept the Nobel Peace Prize she won in 1991, because she feared she would not be allowed to re-enter her country.

"Is this a private fight, or can anyone join in?" —Old Irish saying

Be my guest. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of fights to join these days. Fortunately, however, we're a country of democracy fighters, and you can join one or more wherever you are—or start your own! I don't mean to fight for fighting's sake, but fight to take our country back.

Join Global Trade Watch to stop the latest sovereignty-choking glob of global greed called Free Trade Area of the Amer-

icas, which "frees" corporations to privatize everything from schools to postal services in your city or anywhere else in the Western Hemisphere, whether we want it or not (www.tradewatch.org).

Join the millions of people working in cities all across our country to stop Ashcroft and Ridge from getting local police to assist in federal surveillances, interrogations, and other autocratic actions that violate our civil liberties and constitutional rights (www.bordc.org).

Join a growing number of grassroots organizations daring to confront the very heart of corporate power by challenging the absurd notion that a corporation is a "person"—a fiction that, ironically, gives these paper structures more power than a real person has, or, as we've seen, more power than an entire nation of actual living, breathing persons (www.reclaimdemocracy.org).

Join the fight for living wages in your city, the fight to reclaim our public airwaves, the fight to make public schools work again, the fight to stop redlining and predatory lending, the fight to let patients and doctors decide about medical marijuana without the police intruding, the fight for public funding of your local and

state elections, the fight to [FILL IN YOUR FAVORITE HERE]:

Don't wait on "heroes" or national leaders. Be your own hero—everyone can do something, everyone makes a contribution. Everyone who does any heavy lifting in the democratic cause is a hero. As writer Elbert Hubbard noted a century ago, "God will not look you over for medals, degrees, or diplomas, but for scars."

The important thing to know is that you are wanted. You are needed. You are important. You are not only what democracy counts on, you are what democracy is.

Thomas Paine saw in America something breathtaking, which he expressed as the opportunity to "start the world over again." Paine and others got America off on the right foot, but our leaders have stumbled badly of late. That's why we have to step in now. You and I have the chance to bring our great country back to the ideals that launched it, ideals that remain gently nestled in our hearts.

Live your ideals. ■

Jim Hightower is the author of *Thieves in High Places* (Viking 2003), from which this was excerpted.

Classifieds

ORGANIZATIONS

GIRLS IN THE GAME, a Chicago nonprofit, provides and promotes sports & fitness opportunities, health education, and leadership development to enhance the overall health and well-being of all girls. To get involved, contact Kathi Seiden at (773) 935-2401 or kathi@girlsinthegame.org.

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WEB SITES

WHAT'S HAPPENING? Log on to www.sagacious-smartass.com.

Don't Be an IDIOT!

By JIM HIGHTOWER

The greatest offense against our society these days is not any one law or a particular assault on our freedoms. Rather, it is the persistent, insidious effort by those who shape our culture to reduce the American citizenry to idiots. From corporate advertisers to political sermonizers, from boards of education to the entertainment programmers, their goal is idiocy.

By "idiots," I'm referring to more than the constant charge that we're all a bunch of dummies. That's just manufactured media fluff. Far from being a nation of numbskulls, people (and especially young folks) are smarter than ever. But to what end?

The original Greek word "idiotes" referred to people who might have had a high IQ, but were so self-involved that they focused exclusively on their own life and were both ignorant of and uncaring about public concerns and the common good.

Such people were the exact opposite of the Athenian democratic ideal of an active citizenry fully involved in the civic process, with everyone accepting their responsibilities to each other and all of humankind. This is the ideal that Jefferson and Madison built into our nation's founding documents, the ideal that Lincoln embraced when he spoke of striving for a "government of the people, by the people, for the people," the ideal that Justice Louis Brandeis was expressing when he wrote that "The most important office" in our land is "that of a private citizen."

Be an involved citizen? Forget about it, Jake. Don't waste your time. Get a job, keep your head down, play the lottery, don't be different, take a pill, watch "reality TV," buy things, play it safe, live vicariously, don't make waves, pre-pay your funeral. Oh, and on those big questions—such as economic fairness, going to war, "rebalancing" that liberty/security equation, and the shrinking of democracy itself—don't hurt your little gray cells by focusing on them, for there's not a lot you can do about them, we know more than you do, and don't worry ... we'll take care of you. Go about your business—be a good idiot.

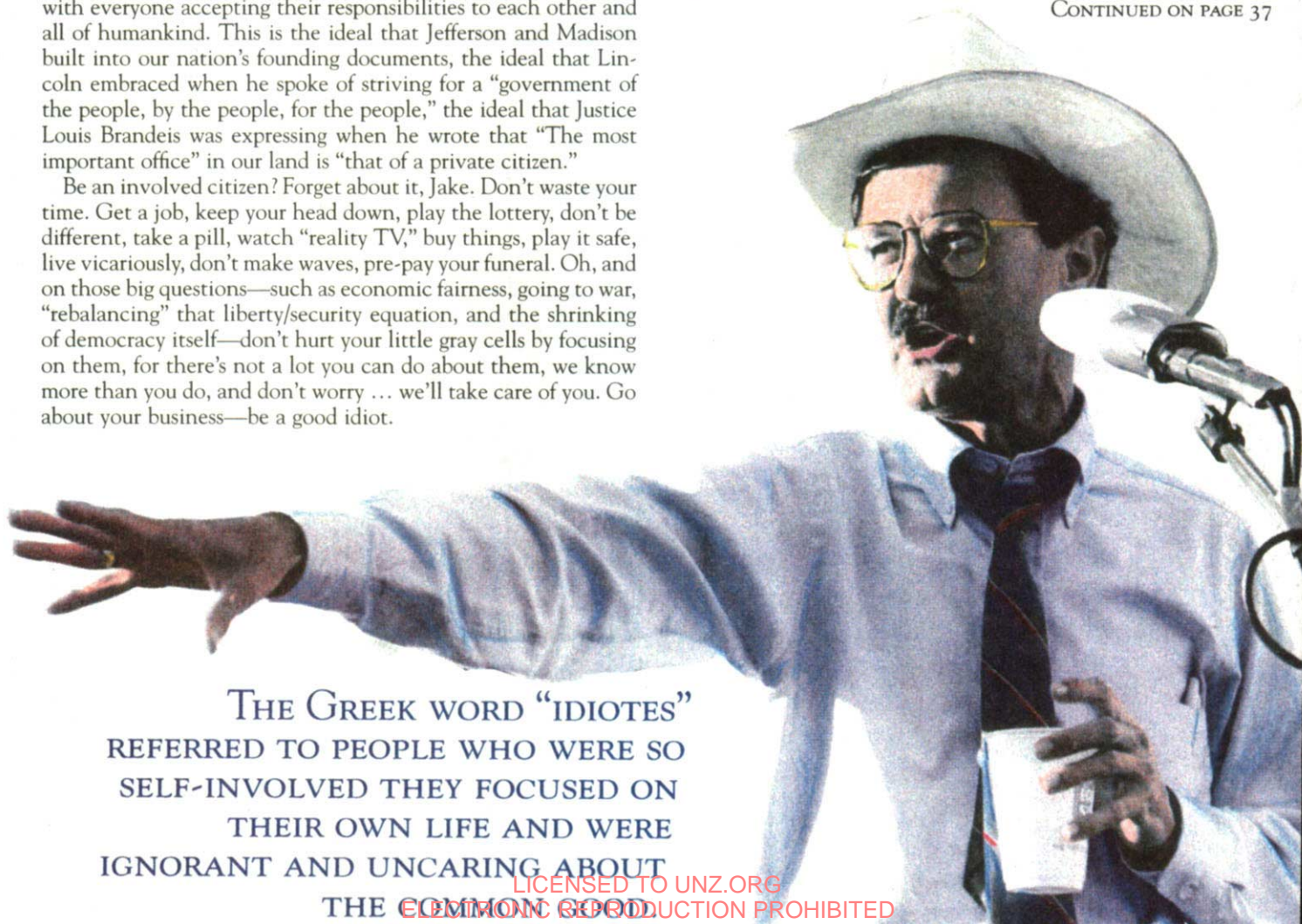
Come on, America, that's not us! Don't let BushCo and the Kleptocrats steal our country and trivialize We The People as being nothing more substantial than passive consumers who can even be made to cower in duct-taped "safe rooms" whenever the governing authorities shout "Code Orange!" out their windows. (How pathetic is that?)

America wasn't built by conformists, but by mutineers—we're a big, brawling, boisterous, bucking people, and now is our time!

Our democracy is being dismantled right in front of our eyes—not by crazed foreign terrorists, but by our own ruling elites. This is a crucial moment when America desperately needs you and me to stand as full citizens, asserting the bold and proud radicalism of America's democratic ideals.

You think democracy asks a lot of us—too many meetings, too much risk of getting your name on Ashcroft's database, too much confrontation with authority? Try walking a few miles in the shoes of Aung San Suu Kyi. Burma's military thugs would

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37



THE GREEK WORD "IDIOTES"
REFERRED TO PEOPLE WHO WERE SO
SELF-INVOLVED THEY FOCUSED ON
THEIR OWN LIFE AND WERE
IGNORANT AND UNCARING ABOUT
THE COMMON GOOD

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED